

Algerian security services. Some witnesses reported that several of the injured had been seriously hurt. The attack took place while a high-level European Union (EU) delegation was visiting Algiers for talks with government officials and other influential figures on a wave of violence officially blamed on Islamists.

Queen Noor hosts iftar for 600 orphans

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday hosted an iftar at the Regency Hotel for nearly 600 children from the Ministry of Social Development's orphanages located throughout the Kingdom and from the SOS Children's Villages in Amman and Aqaba, according to a press release.

Queen Noor, who initiated iftars with the country's orphans in 1996, chatted with the children and expressed her gratitude for the Regency Hotel's generous sponsoring of the iftar, the statement said.

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Manser, Senator Leila Sharaf, the ministry's Secretary General Farouk Nagehweh, members of the Children's Affairs Division at the ministry, and the SOS board members attended the iftar with the Queen.



Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday meets with several children at the iftar she hosted for the orphans from the Ministry of Social Development's homes. Nearly 600 children attended the iftar (Petra photo)

Princess Basma inspects conditions of villages in Shobak as part of Ramadan Charity Campaign

SHOBAK (Petra) — In the course of the charity campaign conducted by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) during the month of Ramadan, HRH Princess Basma visited villages in the Shobak district in southern Jordan to inspect conditions of local residents as the campaign to raise funds for the needy continued.

The Princess first called at the Zubeiriah cluster of villages, where she witnessed the commencement of work by a mobile clinic and the start of a collective agricultural production project.

She heard a briefing by a team of health workers on the services and the areas

the clinic covers, as well as plans for the coming months.

The clinic is part of QAF's activities, which include the creation of six clinics in the governorates of Irbid, Mafrq, Sahab, Ma'an, Aqaba, and Ghor Safi.

The QAF said the mobile clinic in the southern villages will provide integrated services, ranging from vaccinations to dental treatment, free of charge.

The clinic will be moving on a rotating basis to the villages of Rum, Disi, Rashadih, Queira, Hamimeh, and Hanout for two days for each.

While at Zubeiriah village, Princess Basma plant-

ed an apple tree sapling on a 10-dunum plot of land, marking the beginning of a project for planting apple and other fruit trees that will subsequently provide for 10 local families working under QAF supervision.

The Princess met the committee responsible for the local social development centre to hear details about the centre's activities. While there, she announced her donation to finance the creation of a dairy production factory to function under the committee's supervision.

Princess Basma attended a ceremony to honour 80 local citizens, mainly members of youth clubs, who have been active in the

Ramadan Charity Campaign and who have participated in the distribution of aid to needy families.

QAF volunteers have presented gifts of food and other assistance to 160 local families and equipment to 49 local families to start businesses.

Accompanying Princess Basma on the tour were QAF Higher Committee Chairperson Mamdouh Abbadi and several committee members.

The campaign, which ends at the end of the month of Ramadan, aims at helping the needy, the disabled, students of poor families, and able-bodied unemployed heads of families.

Airline awaits permission from U.N. to fly Iraqi pilgrims to Mecca

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian government is awaiting a reply from the U.N. Sanctions Committee to its request to transport Iraqi pilgrims from Baghdad to Saudi Arabia to perform this year's pilgrimage to Mecca.

An official from Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier, told the Jordan Times that RJ planes are ready to arrange chartered flights from Amman to Baghdad and Saudi Arabia, but permission from the U.N. committee is needed before the flights can go ahead.

RJ expects to receive a reply within a week at most, he said, adding that Jordan has applied for permission to transport the pilgrims for the past seven years, since Iraq cannot make use of its national airline due to the sanctions, but has not received a favourable response yet.

According to the official, RJ is also awaiting the arrival of a delegation representing the Iranian airlines to conduct studies with RJ officials and the Civil Aviation Authority on resuming flights between Amman and Tehran.

The flights between the two sides were disrupted during the eight-year Iran-Iraq Gulf war.

Meanwhile, Royal Wings, a subsidiary of RJ, has received a new Bom-

hardier Dash 50-seat plane from Canada to boost its operations and increase its flights, mainly to Near East destinations.

The plane, which arrived at Marka airport Monday, was received by HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein and Royal Wings Director General Ahd Quntar.

The plane, the second of its kind in the Royal Wings air fleet, will be used to enable the airline to make three daily flights between Amman and Aqaba instead of the current two, and eight weekly flights between Amman and Tel Aviv, up from the three at present.

According to Mr. Quntar, Royal Wings is planning chartered flights between Aqaba and Sharm Al Sheikh and Luxor in Egypt next month and regular direct flights between Amman and Larnaca in Cyprus.

Royal Wings last year made net profits totalling \$95,000 with only one operating plane. Mr. Quntar said, He added that the airline is in need of a third plane in order to organise direct and regular flights between Amman and Gaza and Cairo.

Royal Wings, which was established in March 1996, is designed to carry out medium-range flights within the Near East, leaving the long-distance flights to RJ.

Court sentences man to six-month imprisonment term for killing sister

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Criminal Court has sentenced a 22-year-old man to a six-month imprisonment term after he was found guilty of murdering his younger married sister in March 1997.

Mohammad Abed, who pleaded not guilty to the charges of shooting his 19-year-old sister Hanan, benefited from a reduction in penalty because he committed the crime in a "fit of fury" to "cleanse his

family's honour," the court ruled.

Mr. Abed first received a one-year prison term, which was immediately commuted by the court because the family of the victim dropped charges against their son.

According to court documents, the victim, who was married for four years, often quarrelled with her husband and had returned to her family's house one month before the incident occurred.

On March 30, Mr. Abed learned from his other sis-

ter Fatmeh that Hanan was going out to eat with another man, and was receiving gifts and money from him. He then plotted to kill her.

The following evening, the defendant met with his sister in her family's house in Jubal Nasser and confronted her with the information that his other sister provided, but she denied having relations with any man, the court said.

"Hanan told her brother that it is not his business and that she was married," court papers said.

"The defendant got enraged with this statement, drew a knife he was carrying and stabbed his sister, a mother of two, five times in the back and neck," the court said.

Hanan died on the way to hospital, the court added.

In its ruling, the court said it decided to amend the premeditated charges originally pressed against the defendant by the criminal prosecution, because "the defendant killed his sister spontaneously, and did not plan the murder."

Council of Ministers reviews deputies' demands from draft budget debate

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Council of Ministers on Tuesday discussed demands and requests made by Parliament members during their debate on the 1998 state budget, which ended Monday evening.

Speaking after the Cabinet session, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said the government is preparing a list of these demands to be

referred to the concerned ministries and departments for possible implementation.

The deputies concluded a five-day debate on the JD1.95 billion draft budget by approving it by a vote of 59 to 15.

The demands made by the deputies included improving services and dealing with corruption and the problems of unemployment

and poverty.

Dr. Mutawi said the Cabinet approved of the creation of a Jordanian-Algerian joint committee with a five-year mandate to lay down the legal framework for developing and expanding bilateral cooperation in economic, trade, cultural, technical and scientific fields.

The annual meetings of the committee, which will

be co-chaired by a minister from each side, will alternate between Amman and Algiers, the minister stated.

He added that the Cabinet also endorsed an agreement between the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications and a number of local, Arab, and foreign companies to conduct fast mail services between Jordan and the rest of the world.

Japan, UJ sign agreement for provision of medical equipment

AMMAN (J.T.) — The University of Jordan on Tuesday signed an agreement with the Japanese government, under which Japan will donate medical equipment to the university's various sections and units.

The donated equipment will cover the X-ray, open-heart surgery, burns, and children's intensive care units, as well as the operations theatre. Japan will also donate equipment to the gynaecology, physiotherapy,

orthopaedic, and urinary tract surgery units.

Signing the agreement were Mr. Miakawa from the Japanese Foreign Ministry, University of Jordan Hospital Director General Mahmoud Abu Khalaf, and Nae'l Haj-

jaj, assistant director of the bilateral cooperation department at the Ministry of Planning.

Attending the signing ceremony were several Japanese officials and senior University of Jordan officials.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King hosts iftar

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday hosted an iftar at Al Hussein Sports City for dignitaries from the Amman and Balqa governorates and performed Al Maghreb prayer with the invitees. The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, the King's Health Secretary Prince Firas, and the King's advisor on tribal affairs.

Princess Zein receives Swiss delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein and Majdi Saleh on Tuesday received a Swiss delegation currently on a visit to Jordan upon the invitation of HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein to promote tourism to Jordan. Princess Zein briefed the delegation members on the Arabian horses in the Ja'far stables and the kind of training they receive in order to qualify for participation in international equestrian competitions. Jordan is scheduled to attend a competition in Zurich in March as an observer.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM
Children's film "Black Beauty" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

CONCERT
* From Arabia to Andalusia in concert, presented by Freddy For Music, at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday, Jan. 22, at 8:00 p.m. (for info call 692696).

LECTURE
* "La Ville dans la Littérature" by Jean - Marc Mangiane at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 7:00 p.m.

Issue of violence in schools leads to examination of societal causes

By Munther Murjan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A recent attack on a teacher by a group of students in the Jordan Valley has stirred a national debate on growing violence across the Kingdom's private and public schools.

A mob of youngsters beat up a teacher at a state-run school in South Shuneh in November to take revenge on him for reprimanding their colleague, forcing the Ministry of Education to close the institute for several days until tempers cooled.

Weeks later, several nationwide seminars were held to try and shed more light on violence in society in general and at schools in particular.

"Violence in Jordanian schools has increased over the years, especially in the past ten years," Mahmoud Massad, director general of education at the Ministry of Education, told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

Among the chief causes linked to soaring violence were "greater [socio-economic] openness, a third wave of immigration [Jordanians forced to leave Kuwait because of the 1990 Gulf crisis], and the introduction of a new education development programme," he added.

Sociologists believe increasing poverty and unemployment, daily scenes of violence broadcast on television, and family

problems caused by a change in traditions and customs have contributed to more violence.

Lack of cooperation between parents and schools, broken families, the "wrong upbringing," negative stereotyping by fathers, and the students' feeling of deprivation and frustration help feed school violence.

"Frankly, I have seen some of the teachers deal with students, and some of them should not be let anywhere near the children," sociologist Musa Shteiwi told the Jordan Times.

"Lack of proper counselling in today's schools can also be one of the reasons for violence, [since] children have problems with their identities, sexuality, etc.," he said.

Some 1.5 million of Jordan's 4.2 million population attend public and private schools, but only 34 per cent of schools have educational counsellors.

According to a 1995 study of 780 teachers and student counsellors by the Ministry of Education, trouble-making and loud screaming ranked first in violent behavioural patterns among students, followed by vandalism and attacks on school property, fighting and severe beatings.

Dr. Massad said a recently-introduced educational method that encourages mutual respect, democratic practices and greater openness in dealings between stu-

dents and teachers have changed the traditional role of each party and sometimes encouraged violent reactions.

"This produced a shock, as both the roles of teachers and students were altered," he explained. "The student who had to sit, listen, and answer only when asked is now a participant, while the teacher, who used to control students and explain the lesson without interruption, is now a learning facilitator who should allow the student to initiate communication."

Some students had other reasons behind outbreaks of violence at schools. One student complained that some teachers often abuse their power.

"Many of them are too arrogant. They try to suppress you and think they have the powers given to God," student Ahmad Salem, 16, told the Jordan Times.

In one incident, two groups of youths engaged in a brawl because the teacher tried to brush aside their feud, he said.

"One of my friends ended up with his front teeth broken," he added.

Jordan's democratisation process, launched in 1989, cast a shadow over schools and universities by giving students new privileges such as freedom of expression and the right to form unions to express their views — for years a taboo.

"These various factors have led to friction between the teacher and the student,

the student and his colleague and in some cases, between teachers and teachers," Dr. Massad said.

"Teachers themselves need to be educated in modern methods of education," Dr. Shteiwi said. "The more you approach new methods in education, the less dependent you are on methods leading to violence."

According to the study, more violence was recorded in schools in Amman, Mafrq, Tafilah and Irbid, locales where most teachers belonged to the old school of thought. Schools often use double shifts to accommodate the thousands of students in these teeming areas.

"Teachers in Amman and Zarqa have spent a considerable period following the old system and find it difficult to accept the new student freedoms," Dr. Massad said.

Lower rates of violence were recorded in Madaba, Jerash and Aqaba, where younger teachers have been recruited.

"Most of the new teachers are more capable of adapting and applying the new educational system," Dr. Massad said.

However, in many cases, trouble brewed because teachers and schoolmasters had to improvise to deal with certain situations instead of following the school's disciplinary protocol, which stipulates punishments such as transferring students to other schools or expelling

them.

"Violence breeds violence," Dr. Massad said. "Normally, teachers should apply the 'school disciplinary system' to deal with abnormal behaviour on the part of students," Dr. Massad said. "But sometimes, a teacher or a school administrator decides to use a form of violence such as harsh words or various degrees of physical violence as a means of punishment."

"And when you ask them why they did not follow the protocol, their answer is: 'We did so to save the student from becoming a drop-out [which would happen] if we moved him to another school,' he said.

Dr. Massad said physical violence was more common in male schools while verbal abuse was more dominant in female schools.

Dr. Shteiwi said traditions in the male-dominated society encouraged macho behaviour.

"Violence exists in both sexes," he told the Jordan Times. "But males are more violent because of their roles in society and because the issue of power and pride is implanted in males, who are also taught that they are more of doers than females," he said.

"We teach males to be aggressive and assertive while we teach females to be more subservient, though this is changing now," he added.

Britain and China agree to post-Hong Kong 'fresh start'

BEIJING (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin here Tuesday and agreed to a fresh start in relations greatly troubled in the run-up to the handover of Hong Kong.

"Both President Jiang and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made it clear that China offers a fresh start to its relations with Britain," Mr. Cook said before leaving the Chinese capital for Hong Kong. "The British government is keen to accept a fresh start with China. We want it to be a fresh start down a broad road which is wide enough for us to develop relations on the many matters of common interest to us both," he added.

Rounding off a two-day visit to the mainland, Mr. Cook was received in the exclusive Zhongnanhai compound near Tiananmen Square where Mr. Jiang and the rest of China's top leadership reside.

The Chinese president accepted a 12-name list of imprisoned Chinese dissi-

dents from Mr. Cook, which included student activist Wang Dan, and reiterated that China was willing to enter into non-confrontational dialogue on human rights.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said meanwhile that Beijing had invited the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to make a goodwill visit to China, although the itinerary had yet to be fixed.

Mr. Qian told Mr. Cook Monday that the invitation to Mary Robinson was open-ended, apparently part of a fresh offensive to win over critics of China's human rights policies.

He also said that China was seriously looking at a second U.N. charter — on political and civil rights — following its signing of the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Mr. Jiang was quoted as saying that Mr. Cook's visit, the first high-level diplomatic meeting between Britain and China since Hong Kong returned to

Chinese rule on July 1, had moved bilateral relations onto a new plateau. Prior to Hong Kong's change of sovereignty, bilateral relations slipped dangerously over a diplomatic stand-off on the territory's political future.

In marked contrast, Mr. Cook received a warm welcome from both Mr. Jiang and Mr. Qian, who praised the "positive attitude" adopted by Britain's new Labour government, which has been in power since May.

Even sharp words last week from Beijing over an official meeting between exiled Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng and a Foreign Office official in London failed to sour the atmosphere.

Mr. Qian and Mr. Cook also discussed Iraq, with the Chinese foreign minister putting his full support behind the United Nations and giving short shrift to Iraq's efforts to have U.N. oil sanctions lifted. Other issues covered were environment and trade, follow-

ing the visit last week by British President of the Board of Trade Margaret Beckett.

"Qian Qichen made an extremely positive statement about admitting British financial companies to the Chinese market, and confirmed that China was favourably considering a licence for a major British insurance firm," Mr. Cook said.

"Britain has a distinctive strength in its financial sector which has much to contribute to the development of China," he added.

Mr. Cook visited an environmental education project in Beijing Tuesday afternoon and was scheduled to fly to Hong Kong later in the day. There, he will meet the territory's Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, representatives of the financial sector and leading democracy advocates.

Mr. Cook's visit is expected to pave the way for a trip here by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in September.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (right) gestures as he meets with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (left) in the leaders' compound, Zhongnanhai in Beijing (Reuters photo)

Worst cold wave in decade compounds Chinese quake victims' woes

BEIJING (AFP) — The worst cold wave in a decade sweeping parts of China has added to the woes of people displaced by the Jan. 10 earthquake northeast of Beijing that left 50 dead, official reports said Tuesday.

The mercury plunged to minus 35 degrees Celsius in the area where 44,000 people are sheltering in makeshift housing since the earthquake damaged 136,000 houses.

The quake, measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale left 12,000 injured, 1,200 of them seriously, in the mountainous region some 220 kilometres from Beijing.

Meanwhile, the government of Australia announced it would contribute 75,000 Australian dollars (\$49,500) in emergency relief.

The aid, aimed at providing for the immediate needs of villagers whose homes were destroyed in the disaster, will

be distributed via the U.N. Development Programme, a statement from the Australian embassy here said.

Monday, the official Xinhua news agency said 11,000 makeshift houses had gone up for the quake victims after the tents put up earlier proved woefully inadequate to keep out the cold.

"Rain and snowfall hampered the smooth transport of goods, the most important part of the country's relief endeavour," Xinhua said Tuesday.

It said police had put up roadblocks and had undertaken snowclearing and added that after the quake, 2,000 policemen were sent to the area for emergency work and to maintain order.

"No criminal cases or serious traffic accidents have happened since the 6.2 tremor," Xinhua said.

In Beijing the mercury fell to minus 14.2 degrees Celsius

overnight Saturday, the lowest night temperature recorded since 1988 and during the day Sunday, it failed to rise above minus 7.2 degrees Celsius, also the lowest daytime temperature in a decade, China Daily said. The lowest temperature recorded in Beijing was on February 22, 1966, when it was minus 27.4 degrees Celsius.

China Daily said the current cold spell should soon give way to fine weather.

The Chinese Red Cross has already received a total of 20.77 million yuan (\$2.4 million) in donations following an appeal for international and domestic help.

The Red Cross in Hong Kong alone has received 11.92 million yuan in donations. Several other countries including Japan, the United States, Germany, France and Britain have also contributed to the relief effort.

Congress to pursue Indian reforms with human face: Sonia Gandhi

BHILAI, India (AFP) — The widow of assassinated former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi Tuesday pledged the Congress party would pursue free-market reforms if voted back to power in coming elections.

Making her first campaign speech in Hindi, Italian-born Sonia Gandhi told a 35,000-strong rally that the once-dominant Congress would put a human face on liberalisation.

She rejected jibes by rival parties that she was a foreigner, describing herself as "a daughter of Mother India."

Earning wild applause, she told her audience: "If Congress comes to power, it will intensify the economic reforms."

But the 51-year-old, who has become the party's main election figurehead since agreeing to campaign for it earlier this month, added: "This will be done keeping in mind the interests of the people, particularly our poor brothers and sisters."

India goes to the polls from Feb. 16 to March 7 after the collapse of a minority coalition government.

Analysts predict another hung parliament, with the Hindu nationalists emerging

as the largest party ahead of Congress.

Congress, in decline after ruling India for four decades after independence, is hoping the aura of the Gandhi name will bring it back to power.

Sonia Gandhi, who married Rajiv Gandhi in 1968 and took on Indian citizenship 18 years later, was accompanied on the platform by her 25-year-old daughter, Priyanka.

It was Sonia Gandhi's sixth campaign rally since she made her political debut on Jan. 11 near the site of her husband's 1991 assassination in the southern town of Sriperumbudur.

She had spoken in English previously but switched to Hindi, India's main language, for her first rally in the crucial Hindi-speaking region which accounts for almost half of parliament's 545 seats.

Bhilai, in central India, is located 900 kilometres south-east of New Delhi.

Sonia Gandhi said in her 15-minute speech that she considered herself "a daughter of Mother India. I stand before you in that capacity."

She highlighted the contributions of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, adding: "Keeping up with the tradition of the family, I decide to follow them

and serve the nation when it is at a crossroads."

Dressed in a sari and speaking with an Italian accent, she said: "To achieve all this, we need a courageous government. Only Congress can give a government that can represent all the people without differentiating between religion, caste and region."

Congress accuses the Hindu nationalist party of sectarian policies and says it will overturn India's secular constitution. India has 120 million Muslims among a total population of 960 million.

Sonia Gandhi's dramatic entry into politics has revitalised the faction-ridden Congress.

Congress spokeswoman Margaret Alva told AFP: "Sonia Gandhi has united all groups and factions that existed locally. There is a new enthusiasm, a new confidence in the rank and file."

"That is 50 per cent of the battle won... I see a very positive swing in favour of the party after her entry."

Two recent opinion polls predicted a hung parliament, with the Hindu nationalists and their allies on top but short of an overall majority.

Dissident may be moved to Beijing

BEIJING (AFP) — China's most prominent political prisoner, Wang Dan, may be moved to Beijing from a jail 500 kilometres away, his parents said Tuesday.

The head of Jinzhou prison, where Wang Dan has been held since the end of 1996, told him last month that he was going to make a report to concerned departments to see if the dissident could be moved to a Beijing jail, Mr. Wang's father said.

Wang Xiancheng told AFP that it would be the first time officials would be reacting to the request for transfer made more than six months ago.

Officials at the ministry of justice and the Jinzhou prison in northeast China's Liaoning province declined comment on Wang Xiancheng's remarks.

Wang Dan's parents last saw their son on Jan. 1. They said their son, a top leader of the pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in 1989, suffers from a sore throat, stomach disorder and vertigo.

They want him moved to Beijing to undergo proper medical tests.

Chinese prisoners are normally expected to be held close to their hometowns to facilitate family visits.

Wang Dan, 28, was handed an 11-year prison term in 1996 for "subversion" after he had been held incommunicado for 14 months. He had already been jailed for four years following the Tiananmen crackdown.

The mantle of China's most prominent political detainee fell on him after Wei Jingsheng was paroled and allowed to leave for the United States in November.

Meanwhile, dissident Lin Xinsu has written an open letter to the Communist Party central committee and to President Jiang Zemin asking for all political detainees to be freed on the occasion of the Chinese new year on Jan. 28.

He also asked them to improve the living conditions of the prisoners, stop persecuting Chinese citizens and allow those exiled abroad to return.

Mr. Lin, 54, is a specialist in traditional Chinese medicine based in the southeastern city of Fuzhou.

German travel agent hangs himself over H. Kong tourism slump

HONG KONG (AFP) — A German travel agent committed suicide after his firm ran into financial trouble because of the slump in Hong Kong's tourism industry, reports said Tuesday.

Hans Jorg Schult, 52, was found hanging in his office by staff when they arrived for work Monday. Suicide notes were also found.

Staff said Mr. Schult was one million Hong Kong dollars (\$130,000) in debt and had not paid his employees for two months.

The number of staff had also been cut from six to two because of the decline in tourist arrivals since Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule last July, they told reporters.

The firm, which Mr. Schult bought more than a decade ago, mainly catered for European visitors.

Hong Kong has been battling a slump in tourism since it was handed over by Britain to China.

Analysts have blamed the regional financial crisis, "handover fatigue" and the outbreak of the so-called "bird flu" here, which has claimed six lives, for the drop in tourism.

U.S. hints at discussing end of embargo on arms sales to China

BEIJING (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen hinted Tuesday about the possible lifting of the arms-sale embargo imposed on China since 1989.

Questioned during a news conference, Mr. Cohen said the issue had been raised during his talks with Chinese officials, who particularly sought parts for U.S. helicopters bought in the early 1980s.

"I'm sure there will be discussions (on the subject) in future," the defence secretary said.

"I would hope there would be progress made on issues that are of concern to the Congress of the United States and President (Bill) Clinton in the fields of human rights," Mr. Cohen said.

"Assuming that progress is made I'm sure we can also make progress dealing with the removal of certain sanctions," he said.

Sales of military material to China are banned under sanctions imposed by the U.S. administration following the massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square by the Chinese army in June 1989.

The embargo is also upheld by members of the European Union, but British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook — who was also in Beijing — down-

played any possibility that Europe would lift its sanctions.

"We did not discuss it, and I wouldn't myself think it was an immediate prospect," he told reporters.

The embargo has dealt a blow to U.S. armaments industries.

At the Aviation Expo/China 97 air show in Beijing last October, Chinese military officials contacted representatives of the U.S. company Sikorsky in an attempt to obtain spare parts for 24 Sikorsky S-70C Black Hawk helicopters bought in 1984 and 1985.

They also sought to place an order for new equipment. The U.S. sanctions, coded "PL 101-246", cover in particular 12 key parts for the helicopter, including its engine and avionics.

Virtually all the helicopters, which were assigned to Tibet and Xinjiang, have been grounded for years.

According to the New York Times, Mr. Cohen asked Mr. Clinton before leaving for Beijing to make an exception for such parts.

U.S. officials quoted by the New York Times said the proposition was considered premature and was rejected by the White House, though the administration was studying the possibility of relaxing sanctions.

UNITA wants revision of accords on leaders' safety

LUANDA (AFP) —

Angola's former UNITA rebels, preparing for talks between their chief Jonas Savimbi and President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, said Tuesday they want revision of arrangements for their leaders' security.

UNITA's General Artur Vinama, responsible for preparing talks between the longtime civil-war foes, demanded a revision of arrangements assigning two bodyguards to each former rebel official.

Gen. Vinama also insisted that the "special case" of Mr. Savimbi, head of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), be adapted to the "circumstances" — the planned meeting between Mr. Savimbi and Dos Santos.

No date for that meeting has yet been set, but sources on both sides said it could take place at the end of February.

Mr. Savimbi has met Dos Santos four times since his rebels and the governing People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) signed a peace pact in November 1994 to end almost two decades of civil war, but he has refused to go to the capital Luanda on the grounds that his safety cannot be guaranteed.

"We will negotiate and find a satisfactory solution for everybody," Gen. Vinama declared.

The UNITA general arrived in Luanda Monday evening at the head of a delegation of officers responsible for Mr. Savimbi's personal security. First talks with government officials on the issue were due Tuesday.

The talks could also be a forum for negotiations on the return of a top UNITA delegation to Luanda.

The ex-rebels mostly quit the capital after civil war broke out with renewed force when they contested the outcome of general elections they lost late in 1992, which had been held under a first U.N.-backed peace plan.

The Luanda government insists that the total demilitarisation of UNITA, which has sought to retain control of some resource-rich provinces in the southern African country since signing the Lusaka Peace accords in 1994, is a precondition for the return of the movement's leaders to the capital.

De Niro shops for baby clothes

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain (AFP) — Robert de Niro has been discreetly buying baby clothes in Spain.

The actor popped into a store in San Sebastian just before it was due to close, after a telephone call from New York moments earlier asking staff to stay open a while longer.

"He was direct, nice and very pleasant," a manager at the shop said after deciding to break their silence over his visit on Jan. 3.

They said that soon after the telephone call came, de Niro appeared in a chauffeur-driven car and accompanied by a pregnant woman. They bought a few items of clothes, paid by credit card, and left.

De Niro left San Sebastian, in northern Spain, the next day. He had spent the New Year holiday period with an American friend who is married to a Spanish woman.

San Sebastian normally recognises cinema guests — it has a film festival every September. This time, however, de Niro kept a low profile.

'British citizens are last to become Aussies'

SYDNEY (AFP) — Former residents of Britain and the Commonwealth are the last to become Australian citizens, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said Tuesday.

Mr. Ruddock, unveiling a series of citizenship booklets, said an estimated one million Australian residents were not citizens — most of them former British subjects who came to Australia before 1984.

"It is not the English that I am pointing at," Mr. Ruddock told reporters. "It is all former British subjects. It can be people from places like Cyprus, Malta, it could be people from places like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong."

"It is not a factor of Britishness," he said, explaining that it was more a factor of citizens of the former British empire being entitled to British subject status.

Laws in 1984 removed certain rights, including the right to vote, from arriving British and Commonwealth residents who did not take

up citizenship.

The law change had "grandfathered" the existing arrangements, allowing those already in Australia to retain their privileges.

But he said an estimated 50,000 British and Commonwealth nationals still took out Australian citizenship each year, he said.

"When you look at the large numbers of enquiries that we are receiving, something of the order of 200,000 a year, I suspect in time the people who don't have citizenship now will be very much smaller than the million we have acknowledged are there at the moment," he said.

Reports have also suggested that some residents from Scotland and Ireland had refused for many years to become Australian citizens because it would have meant an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, which they were not prepared to give.

However, the oath of allegiance was recently dropped from the citizenship ceremony.



A young Indian boy peers out from the top of a Congress party campaign truck featuring the photograph of Sonia Gandhi framed by former Indian Premier Indira Gandhi and Sonia's slain husband Rajiv Gandhi (AFP photo)

Dissident
may be
moved to
Beijing

BEIJING (AFP) — China's most prominent political prisoner, Wang Dan, may be moved to Beijing from a jail 10 kilometres away, his peers said Tuesday.

The head of Jinchow province where Wang Dan has been held since the end of 1989, said he was going to make a report to concerned departments to see if the prisoner could be moved to a Beijing jail.

Wang Dan, 52, was a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and was sentenced to 15 years in prison after the crackdown.

He was moved to Jinchow province in 1995 after being released from prison.

Wang Dan's family said they were hoping he would be moved to Beijing.

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World News



U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen (left) meets Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the latter's official residence in Tokyo after arriving from Beijing (Reuters photo)

Cohen in Tokyo to discuss U.S.-Japan defence ties, Asian troubles

TOKYO (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen briefed Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto Tuesday about efforts to strengthen military ties with China and security in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Cohen met Mr. Hashimoto shortly after arriving from Beijing, where he capped a three-day visit with a meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Tokyo is Mr. Cohen's sixth stop on a seven-country Asian tour that has also taken him to Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand at a time of economic turmoil. He travels to South Korea Wednesday.

Mr. Cohen told reporters on the flight to Japan that he had "reassuring" words for Mr. Hashimoto about his meetings in Southeast Asia about the Asian economic crisis and China, where Washington is seeking expanded ties with the military.

During his stay in Beijing, Mr. Cohen defended the updated U.S. alliance with Japan as crucial to regional stability and assured Beijing that Washington did not seek to isolate or block its rise as a regional power.

U.S. officials who attended the meetings said the Chinese did not make an issue of the U.S. military presence in Asia nor the new defence guidelines with Japan, which Beijing has criticised in the past.

In a speech to military officers, Mr. Cohen called the U.S. network of alliances with Japan and other countries in Asia "the first pillar" of the U.S. security strategy in the region.

But Washington believes closer military ties with Beijing will ease the level of mistrust and prod China to be more open about its own military plans and intentions in the region.

Mr. Cohen told reporters Washington seeks a "modest" step-by-step improvement in relations with the Chinese military to avoid raising expectations too high and thereby running the risk of them being dashed.

"On the one hand you have people in the United States who may not want to see the relationship proceed so fast — they want to see improvements in the area of human rights," Mr. Cohen said.

"There is also the issue of how far, how fast should the relationship go," he said.

"I've always subscribed to taking very small steps where everybody is confident that the next step is positive, so you don't have these spikes in your relationship where it is up one day and down the next."

Mr. Cohen's arrival in Japan comes amid continuing problems over Okinawa and lingering anti-U.S. sentiment there following the 1995 rape of a 12-year old schoolgirl by U.S. servicemen stationed on the southern island prefecture.

He also is expected to inaugurate a "comprehensive planning mechanism" that sets out how to adjust laws and map out plans for defence cooperation between the two countries.

The revisions to the 1978 bilateral guidelines on defence cooperation identify broader roles for Japan in providing rear area support for U.S. forces in peacetime and in regional crises, according to U.S. officials.

It includes the use of Japanese minesweepers in international waters to keep sea lanes open, but does not commit Japan to specific courses of action in crises or to provide access to specific ports and airfields.

The revised guidelines have provoked fears among some here of a Japanese militarist revival.

Japan's post-World War II pacifist constitution limits the country's armed forces to a self-defence role and bans them from fighting abroad with allies.

Battle to regain Sierra Leone diamond town claims 130 lives

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's military junta Tuesday said a fierce battle for a strategic diamond town claimed some 130 lives, about half of them those of Kamajor tribal militiamen who briefly seized it.

Witnesses reported dozens of headless corpses littering areas around Tongo Field, taken by Kamajors loyal to ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah before troops of the junta recovered control of it Sunday.

Junta spokesman Allieu Kamara stated Tuesday that about half the casualties in the Tongo Field region were Kamajors. About 100 reported deaths were in the battle for the town Sunday, he said, following the killing of 30 people Saturday.

State radio Tuesday, meanwhile, accused Nigerian soldiers of the west African intervention force in Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, of "being behind Kamajor atrocities on defenceless civilians."

"The fighting in Tongo Field has been perpetrated by the Nigerians who are aiding and abetting the Kamajors," the radio said, quoting junta defence spokesman Lieutenant Colonel John Milton.

Since the army seized power in a coup last May, the ECOMOG force acting in the name of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has deployed thousands of troops Leone in an effort to restore Mr. Kabbah to power.

Nigerian forces have clashed several times with junta troops and also carried out air raids on the capital, claiming to be enforcing an economic embargo imposed against the junta by ECOWAS and the United Nations.

However, Nigeria's own military regime — pledged to hand over to elected civilians next October — has come under strong criticism for far exceeding its mandate in Sierra Leone by excessive use of force.

Witnesses who fled the fighting in Tongo Field spoke of dozens of civilian corpses, some headless, some with amputated feet, others gagged, on roads out of the town.

"I lost count of the number and many of them had their faces buried in the muddy soil," said one man reached by telephone in Kenema, 240 kilometres east of the capital.

Reports suggested at least some of the civilian killings were the result of old scores related to land and chieftaincy disputes.

The military regime of Lieutenant-Colonel Johnny Koroma has pledged to restore power to the elected civilian authorities next April, in a pact reached under the ECOWAS aegis.

Mr. Kabbah, elected in March 1996, was ousted amid ongoing strife in the West African country which had been wracked by a civil war since 1991 between previous regimes and rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who largely rallied to Koroma's junta.

Kamajor traditional tribal hunters have formed a powerful militia force at odds with the military regime in the mineral-rich west African nation, once also a tourist haven renowned for its splendid beaches.

U.S. health authorities to regulate human cloning

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will regulate human cloning and consider unauthorised experiments with the procedure a violation of federal law, The Washington Post said Tuesday.

"Through the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act we do have the authority to regulate human cloning, and we are prepared to assert that authority," Acting FDA Commissioner Michael Friedman said in an interview.

His comments confirmed Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala's statement to CBS television on Jan. 11 that the U.S. government would not allow a Chicago scientist to go ahead with plans to clone humans.

Mr. Friedman said anybody who wants to carry out human cloning experiments legally must file a formal application with the FDA, which would then undertake a lengthy review.

The FDA will initiate legal action against anyone who does such experiments without filing an application, Mr. Friedman said.

Ever since Chicago physicist Richard Seed said this month he plans to clone human beings, national and international debate on the procedure has raged, with the U.S. government taking steps to head off what it considers a potentially immoral procedure.

President Bill Clinton has slapped a five-year ban on federal money being used in cloning experiments and is urging Congress to pass a bill banning the procedure altogether.

In the first accord of its kind, 19 European countries have signed an agreement banning human cloning.

Mr. Friedman said that after weeks of reviewing the issue, the FDA had determined that the kinds of manipulations involved in human cloning presented "serious health and safety issues" for the fetus and the mother.

Another FDA official said scientists interested in carrying out human cloning experiments would have to file an "investigational new drug application," which drug companies have to submit before testing new medicines on people.

Mr. Seed said he plans to open cloning clinics to help infertile couples in the United States and abroad.

Yeltsin needs to keep reform duo — Nemtsov

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian government needs to keep its duo of young reformers in 1998 to press on with its economic programme before new elections, First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov said in an interview published Tuesday.

"The president (Boris Yeltsin) and prime minister (Viktor Chernomyrdin) well understand that if everything is undone now and a new government formed, it will simply be a waste of time," Mr. Nemtsov told the Izvestia daily.

Mr. Nemtsov, who was appointed first deputy prime minister along with Anatoly Chubais last March, said 1998 was "the last year for normal work."

"Next year the elections will start — first parliamentary, then presidential. I think the good sense of the president and prime minister is more decisive today, whatever trends were left over from last year," Mr. Nemtsov said.

However, he admitted that he and Mr. Chubais had seen their positions weakened by a scandal which rocked the government in November and sparked rumours that they may be sacked.

"There is no smoke without fire. Clearly, one cannot come through last year's series of scandals unscathed," Mr. Nemtsov said.

Three of Mr. Chubais' close allies were sacked from the government and Mr. Chubais lost the finance ministry portfolio after Russian media reported that they had received lavish fees for a book on privatisation.

Mr. Nemtsov was not implicated in the corruption allegations, but the scandal was a blow to the reformers' credibility, coinciding with widespread discontent over huge public sector wage arrears.

Mr. Nemtsov told Izvestia that Mr. Yeltsin had appointed him for two years, and "the president has never deceived me."

"I don't think he's going to deceive me either, so I'll work for two years (in the government), and then we'll see," he said.

Mr. Nemtsov also defended Mr. Chubais, 42, describing him as "an honest man who keeps his promises," and "one of the country's best organisers."

The Communist-led opposition in the Lower House of Parliament has repeatedly urged Mr. Yeltsin to sack Mr. Chubais, whom they revile for having masterminded Russia's controversial privatisation programme.

Despite a scolding from Mr. Yeltsin, Mr. Chernomyrdin defended the government's record Monday, saying it had cleared the huge wage backlog by a Jan. 1 deadline imposed by the president.

Mr. Nemtsov praised Mr. Yeltsin Tuesday as "a very strong man with powerful magnetism."

Mr. Yeltsin, who turns 67 on Feb. 1, arrived back at the Kremlin Monday from a two-week holiday, which followed a two-week convalescence at a sanatorium last month after contracting a chest infection.

Mr. Nemtsov, 38, reiterated that he would not run for the presidency in the 2000 elections, despite positive public opinion ratings.

Mr. Nemtsov said Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov had much better chances of winning crucial regional support in the presidential race than Mr. Chernomyrdin, but added that both would withdraw from the race if Mr. Yeltsin opted to try for a third term.

Yeltsin fears some CIS members want to quit

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed concern Tuesday that some former Soviet republics wanted to quit the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"If we sum up 1997, we have to say it — we've let the CIS issue slip away... some have even made up their mind to quit the CIS," Mr. Yeltsin said in televised comments to Valery Serov, a deputy prime minister in charge of CIS affairs.

Defending his work with the loose grouping set up after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Mr. Serov said: "A lot has been done — with your help and with your personal participation."

Mr. Yeltsin, who returned to work Monday after a two-week vacation, called for more active development of ties within the CIS, which includes all 15 former Soviet republics except Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

"It is time for a very active period in the work of the CIS, all this year will be very active in this respect," he said.

Mr. Serov said all of the leaders of CIS countries backed Mr. Yeltsin's efforts and dismissed the suggestion that any wanted to leave.

"All responsible politicians, heads of states understand the value of the CIS and its meaning, there is no talk of quitting," Russian news agencies quoted Mr. Serov as saying.

The CIS is divided into states such as Russia which promote the group and others whose support is lukewarm.

Many CIS states openly criticised Russia for its domination of the grouping at a CIS summit in Moldova last October, and a summit planned for January was postponed.

Members have also criticised attempts to build blocs within the CIS, such as Russia's moves towards union with its Slav neighbour Belarus.

Earlier this month, the presidents of five former Soviet republics in central Asia, struggling to reduce their dependence on Moscow, agreed that each state would decide independently on its participation in the CIS.

The presidents of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, meeting in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat, seemed to see little future for the CIS.

They vowed more economic and political cooperation

Havel reelection leaves Czechs cool

PRAGUE (AFP) — "For me, President Havel was never a national hero," says 29-year-old Loesmond Roth, standing at the end of Wenceslas Square, heart of the 1989 bloodless Velvet Revolution which ended Communist rule in what was then Czechoslovakia.

"He was a good human being in 1989, and he is still a good human being. But there are perhaps more important questions for our country," the comments by the young entrepreneur — Mr. Roth runs his own computer graphics company — are typical of the reaction to Mr. Havel's reelection Tuesday as president of the Czech Republic for a second five-year term.

The 61-year-old former dissident playwright was opposed by only two marginal candidates, a Communist and a far-right leader, in the parliamentary vote to keep him as the nation's largely symbolic head of state.

His reelection by deputies in an ornate hall in Prague Castle was pushed down the front pages of Czech newspapers Tuesday by the threat by caretaker Premier Josef Trosovsky to resign. The political turmoil since the government was forced to quit two months ago has dominated the media for weeks.

"President Havel is good for our country. He helps us to be noticed by other countries. He is a good man," says Jana Levy, a 24-year-old economics student, over a hamburger at a McDonald's restaurant.

The U.S. fast food outlet is directly opposite the balcony from which Mr. Havel addressed a crowd of 200,000 people in November 1989, telling them: "One day the historians will call these days extraordinary."

For many Czechs, their country's applications to join the European Union and NATO are far more pressing than reelecting their president.

"It is important for us to join NATO. We need the support of the West," said Martin Podhorsky, a 42-year-old who runs his own poultry business.

"There are still a lot of Communists in this country," he said.

The Czech Republic is among the first in line to join NATO next year, and along with Hungary and Poland is due to begin talks on joining the European Union in March.

Two years ago the country was the showpiece economy of the region. Tourism in particular exploded exponentially as westerners flocked to see the splendours of Prague.

But a currency crisis last year, surging unemployment and stagnant growth have shattered the illusion of an economic miracle.

"People are aware that it is not going to be easy. Joining the European Union will not solve all our problems," says Mr. Levy.

In 1989 Mr. Havel was certainly a national hero to at least some of his countrymen. But economic and political reality has made matters more complicated.

"Saint Wenceslas was a real national hero," said Mr. Roth, pointing up to a statue of the 10th century Bohemian leader canonised after being killed by his brother.

"But we need more than saints to help us now."

U.S. health authorities to regulate human cloning

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New Bosnian Serb government seeks to stamp authority on region

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The new Bosnian Serb government called for a formal transfer of powers within 48 hours as it sought to stamp its authority across the Serb-run region, officials said.

The new, moderate, prime minister, Milorad Dodik, told a first government meeting late Monday that his hardline predecessor Gojko Kljickovic should transfer his power within 48 hours, while his ministers would have 72 hours to hand over.

The hardliners, loyal to indicted wartime leader Radovan Karadzic, had threatened to oppose the Dodik government which includes representatives of Muslim and Croat voters.

The government Monday froze government bank accounts to prevent any funds being siphoned off before power is fully transferred.

The new government was elected by parliament in the early hours of Sunday. The legislature was elected in November of last year.

Overnight Sunday, NATO troops increased patrols around sensitive areas in the Serb-run Republika Srpska to prevent any threat to the new western-backed government.

It is more supportive of the Bosnian peace process than its hardline predecessor and is likely to get strong support from the west, freeing up Western aid stalled by its predecessor's blocking of progress in implementing the Dayton Peace accords.

Mr. Dodik called on the parliament to hold a session on Jan. 24 in Banja Luka, when new ministers would take an oath of office.

He said the government would prepare to transfer the Bosnian government to Banja Luka, the biggest city in Serb-held territory, from Pale.

Banja Luka is the most cosmopolitan city in Serb hands and has long been waging a power struggle with the hardline clique grouped around Mr. Karadzic in his powerbase, Pale, outside Sarajevo.

Mr. Dodik said his government would also "examine" all the decisions made by former government and parliament since July 3, when Serb President Biljana Plavsic dissolved the previous Serb assembly.

Mr. Dodik Monday told a Sarajevo radio station that he hoped "to establish total control over the territory of Republika Srpska within a month."

Quoted by the independent Bosnian news agency Onasa, he said his government would take "the proper measures" regarding war criminals.

He did not elaborate on the war crimes issue, although the handing over of indicted war criminals is a key item in the 1995 Dayton accords that brought the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict to a halt.

Bosnia envoy Carlos Westendorp told Spanish television Mr. Karadzic would soon be appearing in court.

"I am convinced he will end up before the (U.N. War Crimes) Tribunal in The Hague," either voluntarily or handed over by the Bosnian Serb authorities, he said.

President Plavsic said the new government would be sworn in this week, "as soon as possible."

In a major boost for Mr. Dodik, the Yugoslav government in Belgrade Monday recognised the new government, apparently ending support for the hardliners to which it has long been loyal.

Yugoslav Prime Minister Radoje Kontic sent a message to Mr. Dodik, wishing him and his government "every success" in promoting the "well-being of the Republika Srpska and all its citizens."

The west hopes the new government will be more supportive of measures to move forward the Bosnian peace process, including integrating its financial system.

Mr. Westendorp Tuesday was expected to hand down a decision on a long-delayed common currency for the divided country after the joint presidency Monday again failed to reach a compromise.

Court dismisses Blaskic death threat report

THE HAGUE (R) — The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal Tuesday dismissed a report that Bosnian Croat General Tihomir Blaskic has faced death threats since his surrender to the United Nations court in 1996.

Dutch state radio reported Gen. Blaskic, on trial in the Hague for alleged crimes against humanity, was transferred from house arrest to Scheveningen jail last June but said the move was made out of practical considerations.

"In view of his trial, it was much more practical to be in the tribunal detention unit," Mr. Chartier said.

A justice ministry spokesman said he could not confirm the radio report.

In June, Gen. Blaskic became the highest ranking officer to stand trial before the international criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia.

The first suspect to turn himself in, he managed to negotiate special detention conditions with the authorities.

Gen. Blaskic denies charges he directed a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign against Muslims in central Bosnia from 1992 to 1994.

safety while he was under house arrest at a secret location in the Netherlands.

The report did not specify who was behind the threats or what form they had taken.

"We are absolutely unaware of any threats," tribunal spokesman Christian Chartier told Reuters.

He confirmed Gen. Blaskic's transfer to Scheveningen jail last June but said the move was made out of practical considerations.

"In view of his trial, it was much more practical to be in the tribunal detention unit," Mr. Chartier said.

Features

Petra papyrus scrolls suggest trans-millennial cultural and linguistic continuity in south Jordan

This feature is the second of a three-part series on the analysis of the papyrus scrolls that were discovered in 1993 among the remains of a 6th Century Byzantine church in Petra.

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

DR. ROBERT Daniel, an American papyrologist who has been working on the Petra scrolls with the University of Michigan team since 1996, has spent the last several months at the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman analysing the texts of some scrolls, and working with Jordanian colleagues to interpret the material. He has collaborated closely with Omar al-Ghul, a Semitic philology expert and assistant professor in the Department of Epigraphy at Yarmouk University, for the analysis of names and words; and with Hani Ali Falahat, assistant inspector of antiquities at Petra, for the identification of places in the Petra region that may still bear the same names that are mentioned in the Byzantine scroll texts.

The analysis and publication phase of the work on the scrolls is under way, conducted jointly by teams from the University of Michigan and the University of Helsinki, headed respectively by Dr. Ludwig Koenen and Dr. Jaakko Frösén. Over 22 international scholars have worked on the translation and analysis of the texts.

Perhaps the most interesting papyrus roll in the Michigan collection, Dr. Daniel says, is roll 10, named Papyrus Petra Khaled and Suha Shoman after its "adoptive parents." It is a division of property among three brothers, Bassus, Epiphanius, and Sabinus, grandsons of a certain Bassus who appears in other texts. The scroll was skillfully and very professionally produced, Dr. Daniel said, "probably by a scribe who was a combination of scribe and legal expert."

The scroll is noteworthy for several reasons: the information it provides about ancient society and legal practices in Petra, about the nature of the wealth of the families in question, about the personal names used, and about the names used for places and for buildings, houses and parts of houses. The place names and the names for buildings and parts of buildings consist for the most part of Arabic words and names that were written in Greek letters. Since the documents are all from the 6th century, they thus provide rare evidence of pre-Islamic Arabic. The texts also strikingly document the continuity in some place names in the Petra

region from the 6th century until today.

The property being divided among the three brothers in scroll 10 (mostly houses, apartments, and small pieces of land) was located in several distinct areas — land in the countryside including land in a rural area called Ogbana, dwellings in a village called Seril, and dwellings in the city of Petra. Two of the three brothers inherit slaves, though the family's extensive wealth mainly comprised immovable property, such as vineyards, sown land, and housing complexes with orchards.

Enduring names

Some of the ancient place names mentioned in the scrolls have been associated with sites that have the same or very similar names today. Roll 10 mentions places called el-Rafida, Math el-Louza and Agia, which may be the sites located five kilometres north of Petra now known as el-Rafid, Umm Louza, and Agia. The place called al-Bassa in the scroll is the area in Wadi Musa still known as el-Bassa, a verdant, well watered region with gardens, orchards and small fields. The site called "Kaf-fat el-Auauer" in the scrolls is very likely the place near Wadi Musa known today as Kaf-fat el-Hawawer, a broad shelf on a terraced slope cultivated with fields and orchards. The earth there has much limestone and is of a whitish colour (providing a linguistic link with the ancient town of Auara, now called Humeima, in south Jordan, which a Byzantine writer said means "white" in Arabic). Another site called "Bir umm el-Khapha" in the scroll may be the place today known as Umm el-Khaffa, more specifically that part of it called Juweirat Umm el-Khaffa ("pit of the mother of disappearances" according to residents of Wadi Musa), a place northwest of Wadi Musa with a pit and well in the middle of it.

The linguistic and cultural continuity in the Petra region that we have been able to document in the scrolls is striking," Dr. Daniel said in an interview with the Jordan Times. "For it spans a period of almost a millennium and a half."

Tribes and houses

Roll 10 mentions an area called "Ogbana" or "Ogbanoi." The papyrus does not call it a village, and fields (not houses) were to be found in it. So the name must have been used for a rural area.

The name is probably to be connected with that of the 'Uqba tribe that once lived in that area. The "Beni 'Uqba" tribe was mentioned



Dr. Robert W. Daniel of the University of Michigan scrolls team examines a papyrus scroll from the 1993 discovery in Petra (photo by Patricia Bikar)

for the Petra region (Shobak in specific) in the Arabic language chronicle by Nuwairi, which describes the trip from Cairo to this area by the Mamluke Sultan Baibars in 1276. Now that roll 10 has come to light one may posit the presence of the 'Uqba tribe in the Petra - Shobak area from the sixth to at least the 13th centuries.

The scrolls provide interesting new information about houses or parts of houses. One reference to a house named "Baith al-Kellar" probably means "House of Storage," or "House of the Keeper of the Storehouse" (or, the steward), Dr. Daniel said.

"Kellar" is not a Semitic word; it may be a loan-word in pre-Islamic Arabic from the Latin word "cellarius" or "cellarium," derived from the root "cella" meaning cell or room. Another house mentioned in roll 10 is said to have an upper chamber, called "Eliath Alebous," Dr. Daniel said this term "is almost certainly Arabic for 'the upper chamber of Alebous', with 'Alebous' being an old Arabic and Nabataean name."

One reference mentions a "Beit el-Menam" ("house of sleep"), with bedrooms, upper quarters, balconies, a forecourt, stables, a gate, stairways and other facilities — a likely reference to an ancient caravanserai or hostelry. The "Darat el-'Ibad" ("house of the worshippers")

mentioned in the text is thought to refer to a complex of buildings that served a religious function, perhaps a convent or cloisters; since it had passed into private possession, it must have lost its religious function by the time of the writing of the scroll in the 6th century, Dr. Daniel said.

As has been mentioned, a noteworthy aspect of the papyrus texts is that districts, fields, orchards, houses, and even parts of houses have Greek transcriptions of Semitic, mostly Arabic or Aramaic, names. At times the Semitic terms even help with the understanding of Greek terms. For instance, a rare and puzzling Greek word which literally means "dry garden" has been the object of speculation since it turned up some 40 years ago in a papyrus from Nessana in the Naqab (Negev) desert. The word appears now in roll 10 where 'janna' is its Arabic equivalent. So one may conclude that a "dry garden" in Greek is a shady tree-garden (called 'dry' because it does not need to be watered). In Petra, it is close to the houses, providing them with shade. In Nessana, it is just to the south of a village. According to Dr. Daniel, we now can also understand the meaning of the dry garden attested for ancient Constantinople. Sources mention one or two churches as being in this dry garden. It was probably the ancient equivalent of a shady city park. Dr. Daniel points to this as just one example of many ways that the Petra papyri may shed light on details in the ancient world in quite unexpected ways.

Sparkling further research

Professor Omar al-Ghul of Yarmouk University told the Jordan Times that the evidence of the use of Arabic in the 6th century AD, especially in scroll 10, is a major new find that will contribute significantly to our understanding of the development of Arabic in pre-Islamic times. The few known inscriptions in "early Arabic" from before the 7th century are mostly in Aramaic or Nabataean scripts, and now the new material, even though it is in Greek, provides a valuable new body of knowledge about the Arabic language of the 6th century.

"The scrolls add to our knowledge of Semitic languages in general, including Aramaic, Nabataean and Arabic," he said, "but they are also particularly important for revealing the existence of a clear scribal tradition at Petra in the 6th century that included knowledge of Arabic philology. We do not know the identity of the writers of the scrolls, but they obviously were well versed in writing Arabic, even if they were using Greek letters."

This raises other issues, Dr. al-Ghul said, such as the identity of the scribes. Were they Arabs writing in Greek, or Hellenised people with a good knowledge of Arabic? Or perhaps they represent a mixed culture with both Greek and Arab components?

Dr. al-Ghul will continue his research on the texts in the coming years, including preparation of the texts for final publication.

Documenting the Petra region

In the Petra region itself, Assistant Inspector of Antiquities Hani Ali Falahat has been working closely with Dr. Daniel on identifying current names for areas, fields and settlements in the Petra region, and comparing these with names in the scrolls.

"About 20 names of cities, villages, places and fields in the scrolls seem to correspond to names still in use today," he told the Jordan Times in an interview, "and others yet may turn up, he added. The information in the scrolls has prompted the team to launch an ongoing research project to document the names of all plots of lands and natural features in the greater Petra region, especially by recording information, names, traditions and stories that are only available from some of the very old people in the area."

Mr. Falahat explained that every small rural area has a name, usually based on its use or its natural features: of the smaller place names, maybe as many as five per cent of what one finds in the papyri may correspond with place names still in use today. Other place names will have changed in the course of time, and many other place names have started to go out of use in recent decades, as people continue to shift away from agriculture and livestock as their main economic activities. In order to preserve for posterity what still is there, Mr. Falahat has documented over 1,200 names to date, and more are being added every week. He has also expanded his research to include the documentation of words and names associated with social traditions, such as cooking and baking methods, the use of incense, and visits to sacred trees and local shrines.

"One of the fascinating things we have discovered in this research is the very close nature of the links between social traditions here and in southern Palestine, especially in the Beer Sabe' (Bersheeba) area," he said. "Even the names used for plots of land are very similar or identical, which is not surprising in view of what we have been able to document about the close political and cultural ties that have always linked the people of the two areas."

WHERE TO GO THIS WEEKEND

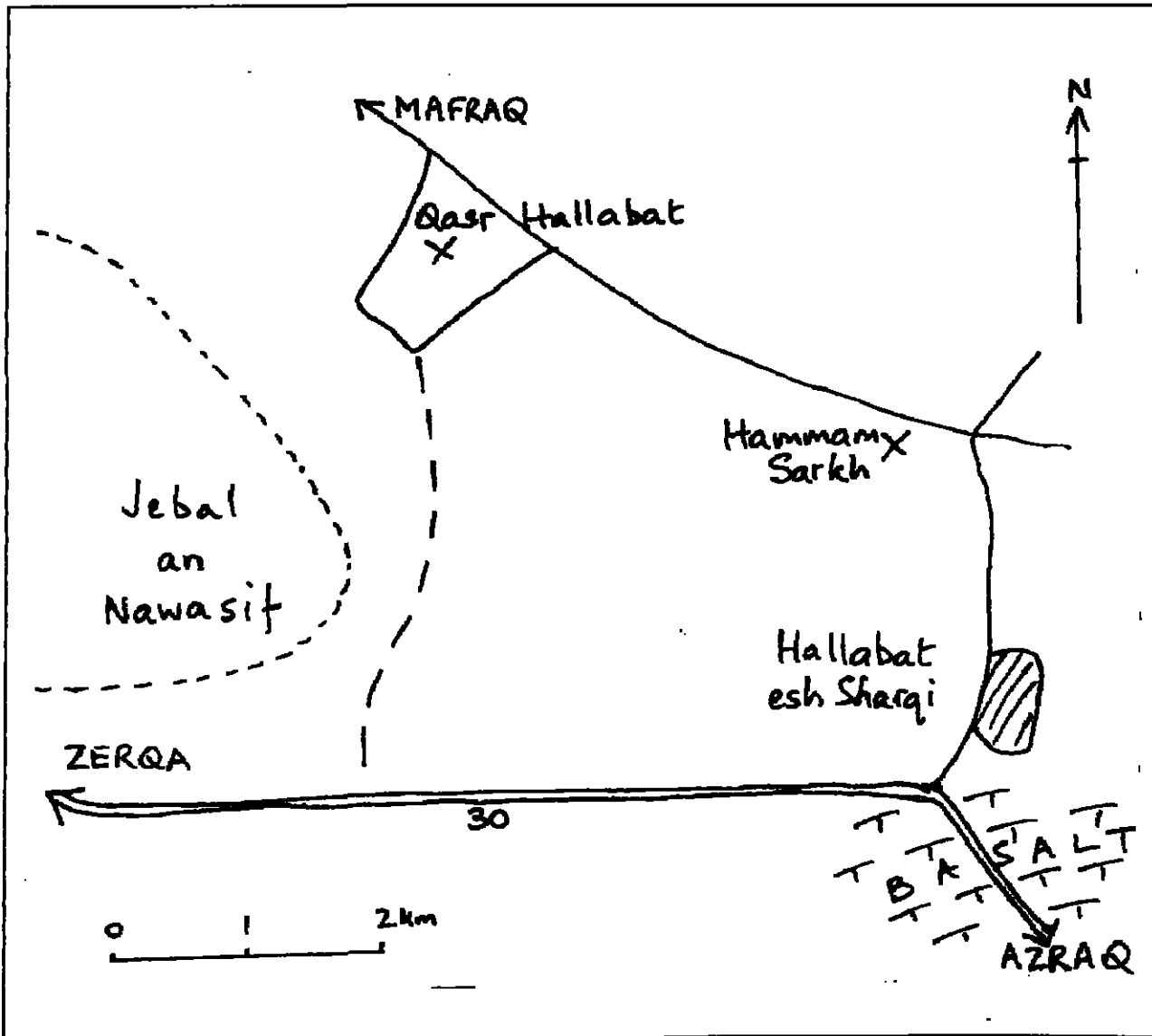
Roaming about desert castles, birdwatching and checking on industry

This feature is the fifth in a series providing information on the less frequented parts of the Kingdom. Geography teacher Richard Tanner leads the reader through the major points of interest.

LEAVE AMMAN travelling south on the Desert Highway and take the main road for Azraq. Pass the experimental farms around Muwaqqar where desert cultivation is being tried and the turnoff for Mi'shash where the Umayyads succeeded 1300 years ago, then suddenly see Qasr Al Khuranah appear like a mirage in the sandy desert. Built circa 710 AD, it looks defensive till you realise no arrows could have been fired from its slits. Enter through the single high gateway, use your torch to see the stables below and the fine plaster work above, before emerging onto the restored roof to view the desert, including the Stone Age site on the fruit hills to the south.

Another 15 kilometres brings you to the second Umayyad "castle," Qasr Amra. Notice the open wadi nearby, which sometimes floods, providing water for these baths from the deep stone-lined well. Enter the hammam and use your torch to pick out the frescoes: the hunting scene, the pornography, the day-to-day crafts, the kings, the steam room and the celestial map. Wander west along Wadi Butin, where you'll find birds among the butin (pistachio) trees and maybe spot eagles in winter.

After 20 kilometres more, bear right at the Zarqa-Azraq junction, past the camel warning signs and solar-powered emergency phones to the



saltworks and the view over Azraq marshes. Occasionally blue after winter rains, Azraq has been pumped virtually dry — the oasis has moved 100 kilometres west to Amman! At Azraq Junction, turn right (south) through Azraq Shishan with its truckers' food stalls — Saudi Arabia their next stop — and turn right after five kilometres for Shawmari Wildlife Reserve. After another five kilometres, you reach a clump of trees and the reserve,

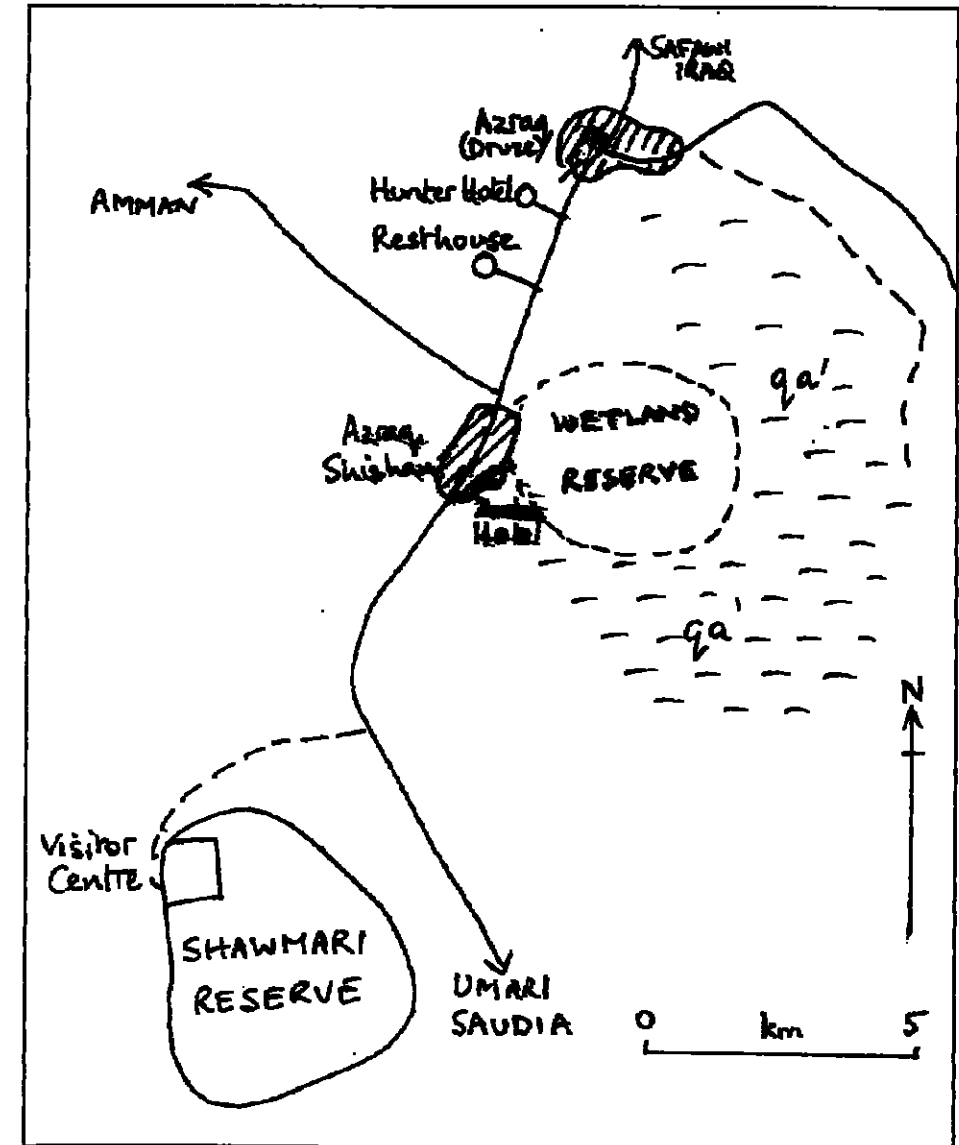
established by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). There's a small natural history museum, ostrich, onager and gazelle nearby and oryx in the distance, viewable from the platform. Enjoy a picnic under the trees or even camp by prior arrangement with the RSCN.

Return to Azraq Junction and continue north to the Druze village of Azraq where, among the basalt houses, you'll find a real castle. Built at this

Empire (300 AD) and re-used by Umayyads, rebuilt by Ayyubids (1250 AD) and re-used by King Faisal and T.E. Lawrence in the 1917 campaign. Azraq Castle shows what time and the 1927 earthquake have left: a fine entrance, solid basalt doors, stables and other buildings. If you have a four-wheel drive vehicle, you can drive around the northern side of the wetland reserve to spot wildlife or migratory birds, but usually it's barren dried mud. Efforts are

being made to restore two ponds and build a new rest house. Returning towards Azraq Junction, you've a choice between the Hunter Hotel and the government rest house for lunch or an overnight stay.

Return towards Amman and this time take the Azraq road, though beware the giant tankers bustling back towards Iraq for more supplies for our oil refinery outside Azraq. This is the black desert, the final outpourings of Jabal Al Arab.



After 50 kilometres, as you are leaving the basalt, the road swings left and you want right (north) for Hallabat. Pass Hallabat esh Sharqi and bear left for Hammam Sarkh, another Umayyad bath-house, from which you can see Qasr Hallabat high on the ridge to the west. Once a Roman fort (200 AD), then a monastery (600 AD) and re-fortified by the Umayyads, Qasr Hallabat stands guard over the valley to the north. Follow the signs and don't miss either the 12th

century mosque or the cisterns outside the walls. Continue west along the road passing through several villages to the old Zarqa-Mafraq road. Turn left and, if you want to see Jordan's oil refinery and check for birds at Khirbet es Samra ponds, follow the signs for Zarqa (or the oil tankers), turn right (north) at the main crossroads before the town for Hashimiya. You'll see (and smell) the oil refinery and power station and, in the centre of Hashimiya, turn right

for Samra lands. After climbing for five kilometres, you'll reach the barrier where, if you explain you're bird-watching, you'll gain access. The smell is not pleasant but, if you're lucky, you may spot some unusual birdlife.

Return either to the Zarqa by-pass or struggle through the crowded town towards Ruseifeh, the earliest phosphate mine, now closed in favour of richer deposits away from town in central and southern Jordan, and Amman.

Officials, economists prefer postponing issuance of Jordan bonds until markets stabilise

By Issam Qadmani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Officials here ruled out the possibility that the government might issue \$100 million worth of sovereign bonds soon, while banking sources anticipated that the bonds will be issued in April.

A senior official, however, said it would be useful to postpone the issuance of these bonds, adding that there will be no harm in waiting until prices in international markets stabilise.

The sources added that Jordan is not in a pressing situation to sell these bonds now. Walid Irsheid, issuance director and manager of the French Societe Generale office in Amman, expressed support for the idea of postponing the issuance of these

bonds, saying that many countries have previously postponed similar issuance.

However, he stressed that the issuance has not been cancelled but will take place when international trading circumstances improve. LIBOR interest rates have increased significantly in London and that puts additional interest rates, ranging between two and three per cent, on borrowers.

As a preferred client for the London banks, where the bonds will be floated, Jordan could have secured prices which are higher by 1-1.5 per cent above the LIBOR prices.

Commenting on the issuance of the bonds, a prominent Jordanian economist said that countries with huge economies are resort-

ing to such issuance while many countries, like Jordan, has postponed the issuance of such bonds because they will incur high costs if they do it at a time when prices are not stable.

The economist said it will take a long time before the interest rates go back to normal.

Banking sources anticipate that situations in international markets will stabilise within the next two or three months and suggested that bonds be floated in April.

They anticipate that Jordan will gain a profit of 30 per cent if the bonds are floated in ordinary circumstances when prices stabilise in international markets.

Non-resident workers must pay 10 per cent income tax

By Iyad Waqfi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Income Tax Department General Manager Mansour Haddadin, Tuesday said that the prime minister's communiqué to cut 10 per cent of the salaries of non-resident workers

achieves tax justice.

"The 10 per cent is not a final percentage as another 1.5 per cent fine will be imposed on the non-residents' monthly income if they fail to pay on time," Mr. Haddadin said.

Mr. Haddadin explained: "Jordanians are considered residents

if they reside in the Kingdom for 120 days during a year or, even if they are recruited at government institutions."

He added that as for non-Jordanians, they are considered residents if they reside in the Kingdom for 183 days during a year.

Egypt pursues gas export deals

CAIRO (R) — Oil Minister Hamdi El-Banbi says Egypt would like to export gas to its neighbours, but will focus on its burgeoning home market if the price is not right.

He told Reuters in an interview this week that separate schemes to export gas to Turkey, Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Libya were under discussion, but pricing had not been agreed.

"We require a certain price," he said, without disclosing Egypt's pricing formula. "If we do not get it, we will not export because we do not need to export."

Mr. Banbi said domestic gas demand was expected to grow 50 per cent in the next two or three years.

Egypt, which now produces about 1.6 billion cubic feet (45.7 million cubic metres) a day of gas, was planning gradually to convert power, cement, steel, fertiliser and other industries to gas, he said.

The use of gas by domestic consumers and in the form of compressed natural gas for vehicles would also grow.

A gas pipeline would reach the city of Beni Suef, 130 km

south of Cairo, by March. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) had been signed with British Gas and Italy's Edison to extend it to Assiut, 90 kilometres further south.

Expanding domestic use of gas had important environmental benefits and was easier than exporting it, Mr. Banbi said.

Egypt's gas reserves, now about 32 trillion cubic feet, were expected to grow as deep-water drilling in the Mediterranean gets under way over the next two years, he said. Oil reserves stood at about three billion barrels and had been declining.

Mr. Banbi said the first gas export scheme to materialise might be one to supply a power plant to be built in Gaza by Agip SpA, an affiliate of Italy's Eni SpA, for the Palestinian Authority.

"It requires a small amount of gas which we can spare, maybe something in the region of 150 million cubic feet a day, which we can accommodate very quickly," the minister said.

The state-owned Egyptian General Petroleum Corp. signed an MoU in 1996 to

sell Turkey's state-owned Botas about 10 billion cubic metres of liquefied natural gas (LNG) a year.

Amoco Corp. of the United States and SNAM, the LNG arm of ENI, each have a 45 per cent stake in the project.

Mr. Banbi said a committee had completed work on technical aspects and financial aspects were "about to be finalised."

He said developing Mediterranean gas fields for the project would cost about \$2 billion, with an LNG plant and pipeline expected to cost another \$2 billion. Foreign firms would finance all the upstream development and about 90 per cent of the rest.

"We have the (LNG plant) site ready and we are ready to go as soon as the final terms are agreed," Mr. Banbi declared.

Another scheme would deliver 200 to 250 million cubic feet of gas a day to Jordan for a pipeline project involving Amoco, Belgium's Tractebel and private Jordanian companies.

Banbi said Egypt was also studying the possibility of exporting gas to Libya for planned power and desalination plants in Western areas. In return, Egypt would import Libyan crude oil for refining in the northern city of Alexandria.

The minister said the idea would be to export 300 to 350 million cubic feet a day to Libya and import 100,000 to 150,000 bpd of Libyan oil, but modalities had not been agreed.

A barter arrangement was a possible alternative to conventional sales. Another was a swap whereby Libya would export to Italy the same amount of gas it received from Egypt.

Banbi said Egypt was ready to sign 12 exploration agreements for a total of \$221 million of investment after getting 29 bids in September. The deals call for 65 exploration wells and cover a total 50,000-square-kilometre (18,750 square miles).

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

A leading travel agency in Amman is seeking to employ (female / male) staff:

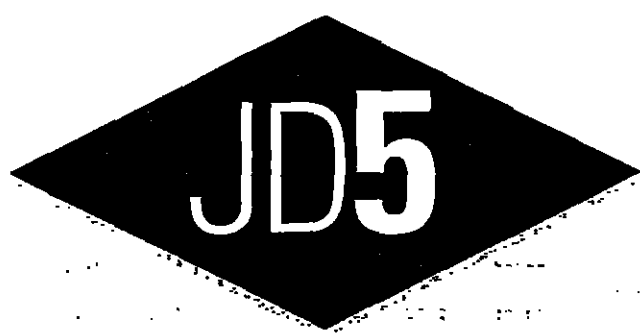
Inbound Travel & Tourism
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Dedicated
Willing to work long hours
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Word & Excel knowledge
Experience is a plus
Other languages are a plus

Ticketing & Reservation
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Good command of English
Min. 3 yrs experience
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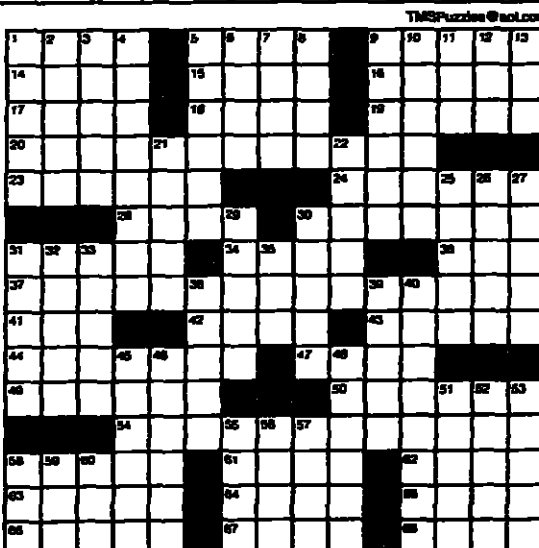
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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS**
1 Disfigurement
5 French pronoun
9 Venetian-blind strips
14 One of Hamlet's choices
15 Letters
16 MTV play
17 Woe is me!
18 Partiality
19 Called it off
20 Many someone much younger
23 Captured
24 Student's pieces
28 Ingrid in "Cissabell"
30 Italian fresco painter
31 Arcing tee shot
34 Cartoon deputy
36 CSA boy
37 Potential codefendants
41 Actress Ullmann
42 Low fat
43 Norse gods
44 Angels' home
47 Brief time spans briefly
48 Mortise
49 Gracefully slender
50 Pyramus' lover
54 Get raves for a bit part
58 Verbalize
61 Meat out
62 Hirsch sitcom
63 Well worker
64 Writer Morrison
65 Moran of "Happy Days"
66 Requirements
67 Energy carrier, in brief
68 Bell tone



- By C.F. Murray
La Jolla, CA

KEEL MAKER SHAG
NEMO ABIDE TONE
ERIC ZENDA URAL
WORKOUT GARMENTS
EARS MOR
SCARFS EASTWARD
MON SKALD OILER
ARGO YARDS NICE
RELIC ROSES DOG
TROLLOPY SALAINS
SEOUTSWAN
WORKOUTSWEATNESS
ALAI LOUITE AVIAS
LINN AMEND LIFT
ENDS RATES SEES

- DOWN**
1 Headlines
2 Intestine segment
3 Adios, Eth.
4 Link
5 Flies into a surrounding mass
6 Non-cleric
7 Whopper peddler
8 "Born Free" forness
9 Gracefully slender
10 Rooster in order
11 Say more
12 Golf gadget
13 Grassy ground
21 Ms. Gurley
22 Condescend to give
25 Day in the movies
26 Varnish ingredient
27 Temperate
29 Relevant Latin
30 Two of a kind
31 Wet impact
32 Cleo, the singer
33 Emie the auto race
35 Comparison phrase
38 Beethoven's "Fur"
39 Hidden supply
40 Put up a fight
45 Tense the party
46 Penetrates
48 Member of a cultural minority
51 Puppeteer Lewis
52 Attack from all sides
53 J.R. or Jock
55 Choir voice
56 Programming repetition
57 Prong
58 "Dombey and
59 Deadlock
60 Puto preference

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You could be impatient today. Someone else insists on checking out all aspects before proceeding. You're also getting a lot of attention, so this is good. Go ahead and urge people to make up their minds, but don't be dismayed if it takes them a while. It might be the end of the week before you get a decision on your proposal.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You want one thing and an older person wants another this morning. A friend is willing to take your side, but it won't be an easy partnership. Your ally has a hidden agenda. Better find out what it is ahead of time. You might decide to accept the boss's difficult, challenging offer after all.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have to do some things you don't like, or even approve of. Don't do anything illegal or immoral. If you'd just rather do something else, that doesn't count as an excuse. What's bothering you the most could be a co-worker who rubs you the wrong way. You can put up with that a while longer. Keep your overall objective in mind.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're going into an area you're not too sure about. That's OK. You have important people on your side, and you've been studying and getting organized lately. Present your ideas to a person who's a little intimidating. He or she won't be able to help but see your logic. Don't wait. The chances of success are best this morning.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may feel like you're marching in place. Nothing seems to be getting done. Actually, you're probably making a lot of minor decisions as you work up to big one. Be patient. Listen to everybody's ideas. By the time you get this worked out, you'll have something you can all live with for years. That's the objective, anyway.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You always like to perform flawlessly, but somebody's just thrown you a curve. This person wants things done differently than the way you're used to. This doesn't have to create a breakdown, but it could mean a little extra effort on your part. That's OK. You have the time to figure it out and practice.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's some financial situation to be dealt with. There also seems to be pressure on a partner of yours. To help, you could offer to pay for more of the household expenses. That would not only ease the tension, but make you stronger and more self-assured. And it would be a nice thing to do.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There could be a conflict first thing this morning. Somebody at home doesn't want to do what you told him or her to. That could be one of your children, your spouse or a relative. It could even be a dog or cat. At any rate, that person will be feistier than usual. Don't worry. You will eventually triumph.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You've been learning new information lately. The problem is that you don't quite have it down yet. You still have to do things the old way until the new way goes into effect. If that sounds confusing, you're right. But you'll probably see this played out in your life today. Just do the best you can.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Several of your friends will be there to help today if you need them. It looks like you have a big project going, and that's great. Don't try to do it all by yourself, however. Accept the help of your friends and your chances of success improve considerably.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There is a definite attraction between Aquarius and Scorpio. It often shows up in romantic relationships. If you're in one now, watch out. That person is going to want to tell you what to do. And if you're really wise, you'll go along with the programme.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) One of your biggest problems is that you tend to get frozen up. Sometimes you just can't think what to do. That's less likely to happen today. And if you've got a calm Scorpio in your life, this would be a good day to ask for money. An idea he or she has could help you gain fame and fortune. Time to collaborate.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

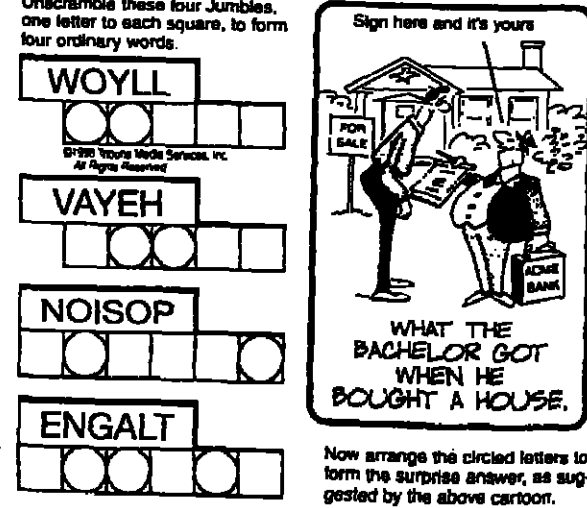
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Mom, I'm going over my childhood medical records. Did you ever have me vaccinated for cooties?"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumble: MOUND CARGO FLEECE OFFSET

Answer: With the diamond dealer gave the customer — A GEM OF AN OFFER

Busine
Daily
A review
Bataineh: 86
in the potash

MoGA prep
he used for

REUTERS
The Bu

Currency	USD	JPY
US Dollar	1.0000	100.00
UK Pound	0.6451	156.25
Swiss Franc	0.8478	136.93
German Mark	0.6366	153.36
French Franc	0.1665	6.55
Italian Lira	0.0002	2036.27
Spanish Peseta	0.0166	166.64
Portuguese Escudo	0.0020	200.48

Oil	Last	Previous
WTI	15.20	14.97
Brent	15.58	15.45
Gas	15.20	14.97
Coal	13.74	13.68
Oilseed	12.20	12.20

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	258.5	259
Silver (oz)	5.74	5.75
Platinum (oz)	373.5	374
Al (lb)	1.482	1.483
Cu (lb)	1.693	1.694
Zn (lb)	1.172	1.173
Ni (lb)	0.619	0.620
Pb (lb)	0.396	0.397

Stock	Index
New York	DOW JONES
Nasdaq	S&P 500
London	FT-SE 100
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225
Hong Kong	HANG SENG
Frankfurt	DAX

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Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Bataineh: 86 per cent of JIC investments are in the potash, phosphate and cement firms

THE JORDAN Investment Corporation (JIC), the government's arm that handles state investments, has equity worth JD150 million at book value in about 55 companies, JIC Director General Mohammad Bataineh has said. The government investments in the potash, phosphate and cement companies represent 86 per cent of the total amount mentioned while the remaining 14 per cent is spread over the other 52 firms.

Mr. Bataineh said the government did not participate in the selling of potash shares on the international market because it found that the timing was not appropriate in light of the collapses in financial markets, especially in South East Asia. "We support the drive but we hoped there was patience in the sale process," he said. "It seems the company was already determined in carrying out the decision which was in its interest and based on its need for liquidity to complete

expansion projects."

The JIC head indicated that the government is currently reconsidering the concession laws for companies and said that the state will not sell its shares in companies having concessions unless the laws are discussed and amended. He also indicated that the government intends to amend the corporation's law in a way to allow the privatisation proceeds be deposited in a special fund to invest these proceeds in developmental and social projects. According to the law in force now, 50 per cent of privatisation proceeds go to the treasury and the other 50 are reinvested in development projects by the corporation. Mr. Bataineh concluded by noting that the government was able to earn JD32 million from selling the state shares in Jordan's Holiday Inn and Inter-Continental hotels (AI Duvtour).

MoGA preparing 80 dunums in Sahab to be used for exporting vegetables, fruits

THE MUNICIPALITY of Greater Amman (MoGA) is currently working on providing the necessary infrastructure services to an 80-dunum area in Sahab where a market to export fruits and vegetables will be set up. Investors and traders will be leased plots of land to establish the necessary workshops based on encouraging investment terms. Municipality sources said MoGA has

provided facilities and incentives to attract produce export workshops, scattered in many areas of Amman, to the new site which is close to the Central Vegetable Market in Sahab. According to the sources, the rent per dunum will be JD150 and for a period of 15 years. The investor cannot rent more than four dunums, the sources added (AI Arab Al Yawm).

Mideast journalists to get 'a taste of quality reporting' through Jemstone project in '98

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Journalists from 12 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean basin are poised to get a taste of quality reporting in 1998 through the biggest media network in the area that was recently relaunched by the European Union (EU).

The Amman-based Jemstone project, created through the union's Med Media programme, has prepared a list of ambitious activities for this year, ranging from specialist reporting workshops to training media managers.

It wants to support and encourage independent, high quality reporting in all branches of the region's media, according to project director, Tudor Lomas.

Through its many activities, Jemstone seeks to increase contacts and understanding between journalists and media professionals in Europe and the 12 countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

This month, J4 journalists will take part in Jemstone's Internet workshop aimed at providing reporters with the opportunity to share "practical self-taught experience" on cyberspace, Mr. Lomas told the Jordan Times Monday.

"Quite a few people in the

media use and understand the potential of the Internet... Through this workshop, journalists will learn from their colleagues' experiences," he said.

The workshop is organised in cooperation with OneWorld Online and IDEAL Training Centre (IDEAL Group).

In February, Jemstone will bring together about 25 seasoned Eastern Mediterranean business and economic journalists in Amman to tackle obstacles impeding business, economic and financial reporting in the region. The workshop will also try to find ways to improve the quality of economic and business reporting.

The week-long workshop, run jointly with the World Bank's Economic Development Institute (EDI), will also discuss local and regional implications of international economic integration, said Mr. Lomas.

He said that the workshop will include a visit to some projects in Aqaba, such as the joint Jordanian-Israeli airport. Journalists will also meet with some officials in Aqaba to discuss future projects including plans for a multi-million-dollar free zone in Aqaba and other tourism projects.

Jemstone has been frequently criticised for focusing much of its activities on

economic journalists, said Mr. Lomas.

"But this focus is no accident. Economic journalism is worthless unless it is accurate, objective, well researched and clearly written. Nobody is going to make decisions based on wishful thinking or popular half-truths. What is needed are hard, carefully-checked, fully understood facts from reliable sources."

Senior journalists will try to produce an ambitious style guide book for Arabic speaking publications through another Jemstone workshop scheduled to be held in Damascus by the end of February, according to Mr. Lomas.

He said that another specialised workshop for environment reporters is scheduled to be held on South Sinai in March in cooperation with the Egyptian National Parks.

To guarantee a successful future for all kinds of media, Mr. Lomas said, Jemstone planned an "Audience/Readership Research" workshop in March with the aim of helping journalists get a firm idea of the actual needs of the public.

This workshop will "tie organisations to their public...to try and provide people with what they want from the media," Mr. Lomas said.

Prompted by the need to

ensure that journalists get proper training, Jemstone scheduled a training programme for heads of departments, who would later help train other journalists, Mr. Lomas said.

The three-week workshop will bring together about 15 training managers in Hilversum, the Netherlands, in April, to be followed up by a workshop in Cairo in June.

To create professional educational reporters in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Jemstone planned a "Specialist Education Reporters" workshop in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Turkey in May.

"Education reporters don't exist. Good things are happening around in many countries and this experience should be passed on as the quality of education determines the future for many individuals," Mr. Lomas stressed, adding that in the future, exchange visits will be funded to give education reporters the opportunity to visit and learn from other countries' experiences.

Skilled news photographers will participate in a June workshop in Gaza, and about 15 specialist media reporters are scheduled to take part in another workshop in Beirut in July, according to Mr. Lomas.

In August, Jemstone will organise a three-week

workshop on journalism skills gathering about 30 "committed young journalists from radio and television to develop their journalistic skills and abilities, and explore new ideas."

In September, about 15 senior newspaper managers will take part in a workshop in Brussels to evaluate the network's activities, reinstate their needs and help reshape Jemstone's future priorities, plans and structure, said Mr. Lomas.

He added that a round table conference that will look at the future of journalists will be held in Amman or Cairo in October.

"Unless journalism is defended, it will disappear and will be replaced with propaganda and commercial pressure," said Mr. Lomas.

Jemstone links over 50 of the main newspapers, news agencies and broadcasters in these countries as well as over 350 of the region's best journalists.

"We are actively looking for more partners to share the cost with us," said Mr. Lomas.

The EU's Med Media programme, launched in late 1993, was suspended in December 1995. But Jemstone and its sister programme, Remfoc in the Maghreb, continued to operate with special EU funding.

SHUJA — FORTE GRAND ABU DHABI'S NEW CRUISING YACHT

THE FORTE Grand Abu Dhabi's new cruising yacht — Shuja — will be launched at the beginning of February 1998.

Shuja is a unique and modern yacht, built in Wisconsin, USA, to the hotel specifications. Shuja, which translated from Arabic means "brave," is a 100 foot long and 20 feet wide yacht, that has been purpose built to provide a dining and entertaining experience for up to 150 people.

It is a steel construction made up of two decks, a small fore and quarter-deck. The upper deck offers an open area, which will be an ideal location for sunset cruises, cocktail receptions and barbecues. The lower deck is fully enclosed with picture windows, is fully air-conditioned and carpeted throughout. Wood panelling is a strong feature and complements the colour scheme of royal blue and touches of matt gold. The two twin engines have a maximum speed of 15 KT. There are two heads (toilets) on the main deck with another on the upper deck. Below deck will be used as a storage area.

A 21-FT speedboat with a 125 HP engine has also been purchased. This will be used as a ferry for guests to and from Shuja in case of late arrivals after sailing or necessary early departures. It will also be used to take guests to the islands on trips such as island picnics etc.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 20/01/98 19:48	
	USD	GBP	CHF
US Dollar	1.8412	0.6143	1.4881
DE Mark	0.6431	0.3333	0.8137
GB Sterling	1.6278	2.8895	2.4407
CH Franc	0.6676	1.2280	0.4098
JP Yen	0.0078	1.2296	0.4768
CA Dollar	0.6967	1.2748	0.4768
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0168	0.3391
NL Guilder	0.0018	0.8873	0.2898
FR Franc	0.1621	0.2884	0.0886

Middle Eastern Currencies		Prices as at 20/01/98 19:48	
	USD	GBP	CHF
US Dollar	0.7090	3.7600	0.3770
Jordan Dinar	1.4184	0.2891	0.5317
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	0.1891	0.1005
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8808	0.9489
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	0.10300
Kuwait Dinar	3.2690	2.3178	1.2358
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1931	0.1024
Lebanese L1000	0.85	0.4643	0.2458
Egyptian	0.2942	0.2086	1.1031

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
	USD	GBP	CHF
Brent	16.20	14.97	0.3978
WTI	15.56	14.65	0.4083
Bonny	16.20	14.97	0.4083
Dubai	13.74	13.65	0.3770
UL Gas	162.00	162.00	238.007

Metal Prices		Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
	Bid	Period	Rate
Gold (oz's)	288.5	1-3	5.80
Silver (oz's)	6.74	3-6	5.50
Platinum (oz's)	373.5	6-12	5.44
AL (3 Months)	1492	12-18	5.38
CU (3 Months)	1683	18-24	5.36
Zinc (3 Months)	1132	24-30	5.36
Lead (3 Months)	619	30-36	5.36
NI (3 Months)	6386	36-42	5.36

Main Equity Indices		High	
	Index	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	7774.48	7785.93
New York	S&P 500	968.02	968.33
London	FT-SE 100	6278.2	6278.5
Tokyo	Nikkei 225	16368.53	16426.2
Paris	CAC 40	3008.34	3013.6
Frankfurt	DAX	4307.91	4307.91

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET		HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN	
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 20/01/1998			
PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.
346,000	250,000	ARAB BANK	14.7
2,340	1,480	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	0.00
3,840	1,420	CHARTER OF JORDAN	0.00
5,300	4,610	THE HOUSING BK.	13.5
4,180	1,890	JOR. KIWAT BANK	10.7
980	620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9
1,050	2,250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2
1,750	870	BEIT-AL-HAL (SHARIA)	-6
BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 228.28	ICBO: -0.20
2,950	2,700	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.6
2,500	1,990	JORDAN GULF INSUR.	0.00
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 120.75	ICBO: 0.00
2,050	1,580	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4
1,550	930	HAZZI PORTFOLIO	0.00
1,650	410	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	24.1
1,590	1,150	HED. HAZI HOTELS	18.0
4,000	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. BDC.	10.3
2,160	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	6.3
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 116.88	ICBO: -0.34
4,450	2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.3
4,140	3,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE INDUS.	10.0
4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	11.8
6,000	4,400	DAR AL-ADAMIA DV. INV.	14.1
3,650	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.6
1,800	820	UNIV. NEW IND.	9.7
700	510	NATIONAL IND.	0.00
1,140	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	0.00
1,660	580	JOR. PETRO. CHEM.	0.00
2,640	1,380	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	13.6
820	530	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	0.00
1,610	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.2
1,820	820	UNIV. NEW IND.	9.7
1,300	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5
1,200	860	UNION CH. & VDO.	46.4
1,810	710	JORDAN SUGAR	32.1
940	570	HED. EAST COMPLEX	7.5
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 111.66	ICBO: -0.23
GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 165.48	ICBO: -0.22
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 20/01/1998			
610	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.9
800	660	UNION INV. 50%	0.00
670	360	ARAB FTH. INVEST.	0.00
1,000	720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	0.00
320	160	JOR. IND. MATCH-JEMCO	0.00
640	440	ARAB FOOD & MED.	0.00
500	280	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	32.2
750	380	HAT. HOLZ. IND. RABCO	0.00
640	340	HAYZAK DIES & MOULD	0.00
520	400	ARAB ELECT. IND.	0.00
660	580	MOBIL. PHARM. 50%	0.00
730	550	HAZZI PHARM.	0.00
470	240	IND. EMP.	0.00
650	570	IND. CHEMICAL	14.9
920	630	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	0.00
820	490	HAT. POLYMER	0.00
950	810	OPTICAL REPAIRING 75%	0.00
1,000	600	HAT. ALUMINUM	0.00
1,100	720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	94.6
1,310	1,000	HAYZAK	0.00
1,000	850	SEKEL PRINT CO. 75%	0.00
GRAND TOTAL		134	395520

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Australian Open

Out go Muster, Ivanisevic and Henman but Rafter survives



Austria's Thomas Muster throws his arms up in frustration during his first round loss to Sweden's Jan Apell at the Australian Open. Apell defeated Muster in straight sets 6-4 7-6 7-5 (Reuters photo)

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Upstart challengers dumped men's seeds Thomas Muster and Goran Ivanisevic at the Australian Open on Tuesday while British hero Tim Henman was beaten in a five-set five-hour thriller.

Australia's World No. 2 Pat Rafter was embroiled in a draining four-set struggle before surviving against tenacious American Jeff Tarango in the night match.

But there were no problems for women's No. 1 Martina Hingis, or men's third seed Michael Chang and a host of other top names.

But World 243 ranked Jan Apell of Sweden stunned eighth seed Muster with a 6-4, 7-6, 7-5 victory in 122 minutes on court two of Flinders Park filled by a record 33,741 people.

The 30-year-old Muster, a semi-finalist here last year blamed "bad timing" for his defeat. "But this is not the end," added the Austrian, who covets another French Open title on clay.

His 29-year-old opponent, who has never got past the second round in a Grand Slam, could not believe his luck.



Australia's Pat Rafter plays a volley in his first round match against Jeff Tarango of the United States at the Australian Open in Melbourne January 20. Rafter is seeded number two for this grand slam tournament (Reuters photo)

"I had so many chances to close it off, but I couldn't so when I got the match point and he missed it was a great relief," said Apell.

Ivanisevic, the 13th seed from Croatia, risked a 10,000 U.S. fine for missing a press conference after his 6-2, 7-6, 3-6, 6-4 defeat by Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands, the world number 71.

He did the same thing at Wimbledon last year and the Grand Slam committee are not expected to be lenient with the hot-headed Ivanisevic when they apply higher fine levels introduced on January 1.

Jerome Golmard of France was the third hero of the day, beating Britain's Henman 6-3, 6-7, 6-2, 3-6, 11-9. Their battle lasted one minute short of five hours — just 12 minutes short of the record

cramping... I've got to learn to remain a lot calmer. I get too intense."

Tarango described one of his best matches as a classic. "I wanted to be like a pit bull and fight and scrap and wait for the opportunity," he added.

Asked if Rafter could win the tournament, Tarango said: "No, he has tapped into some of his reserves and hopefully I've done my countrymen a service here tonight."

Fifth seed Greg Rusedski kept Britain and the power servers in contention by beating American qualifier David Wuu 7-6, 6-3, 6-4.

The two used to play each other in juniors when Wuu was the big server with a reputation and Rusedski said he was "a drifter."

Rusedski was beaten in the



France's Mary Pierce plays a backhand shot during her first round match against China's Fang Li at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Pierce won in straight sets 6-0 6-0 (Reuters photo)

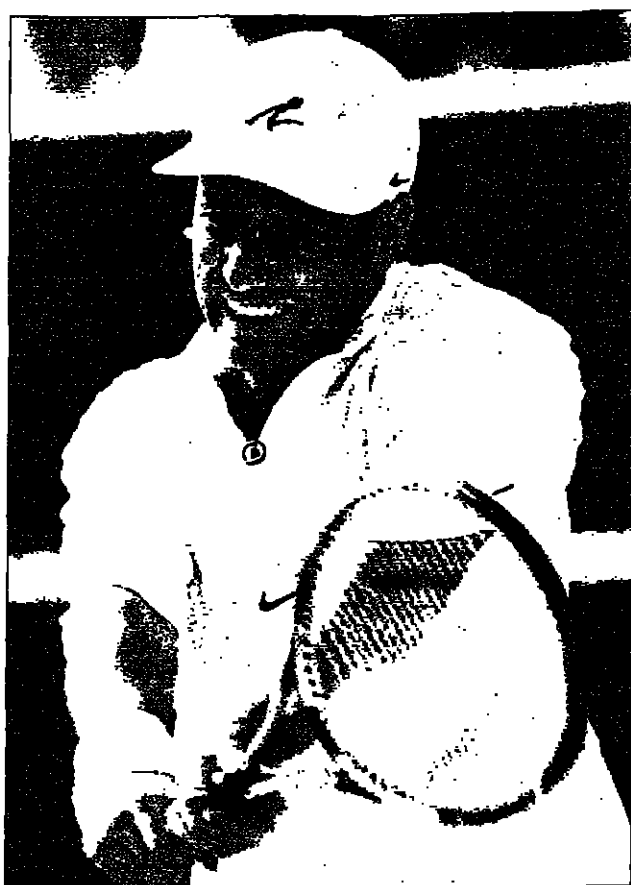
Australian Open match between Boris Becker and Omar Camporese six years ago.

Golmard, 24, sought treatment for a blood blister under a nail on his foot during the final set. But it was Henman, the World No. 19, who had to fight off three match points, two trailing at 6-7 and another with Golmard leading 10-9.

At the end of the 83 minute set Henman said: "That was my worst performance for sure."

Rafter had to fight all the way in the gruelling three hour 27 minute first round match before coming out on top over Tarango, 7-6, 7-6, 6-7, 7-5.

"That took a lot out of me, both physically and emotionally," Rafter said. "I had to take electrolyte tablets for



Andre Agassi

Agassi advances, looks forward to top form tennis

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Fallen World No.1 Andre Agassi believes he is about to step up his game after a year in the tennis doldrums.

Agassi, who ventured into the satellite Challengers tour to rediscover his lost brilliance that earned him Wimbledon, U.S. and Australian Open titles, overcame a first-set loss before winning his first round match at the Australian Open here Tuesday.

He took out Italian qualifier Marzio Martelli, 3-6, 7-6, 6-2, 6-2 in 142 minutes and will now play 16th seeded Spaniard Albert Costa.

Agassi, who was World No.1 for 30 weeks before relinquishing it to Pete Sampras in November 1995, plummeted to 141 in the rankings on November 10 last year.

He resorted to playing in the Las Vegas Challenger where he reached the final to get into a winning frame of mind.

The flamboyant American said he was nervous in his first match at the Australian Open. "I played cautiously and I didn't find my rhythm until after the second set," he said. "In the tiebreaker I had to step it up and then I started hitting my shots a lot bigger and put the match on my terms."

Agassi, whose ongoing commitment to the game has waxed and waned in his 13 rollercoaster years on the circuit, spoke afterwards of his desire to return to big-time tennis.

"I feel like I'm right there, ready to step it up, but I've got to do it now and it's good that I'm still in the tournament."

"I've got to get out there and play big-time tennis and it's going to happen."

Agassi said playing in the Challengers was necessary for him to revive his career.

"I had to find guys who were on my level and play against them and beat them, and to be honest it felt good winning again."

"Players gave me the respect for being willing to make that step down, but to me it was a simple, practical and necessary step that had to be made if I wanted to keep playing and I did."

Agassi said the last thing on his mind while playing in the peripheral tournament was that he was a former No.1.

"I'm a very intense, all-consuming type of person and when I get into something it becomes important to me. I get very single-minded, very detail-oriented."

Agassi equated playing in the year's opening grand slam to the satellite circuit as being "real turkey here and processed turkey in the Challengers."

"There are good players all through the rankings and I just had to pay the price for getting my game back to where it needs to be. It's one step at a time and I'm certainly a lot further down the road than I was a month ago."

In what will only be borne out by his future results, the 27-year-old Agassi said: "I'm motivated to enjoy tennis now, I've been through it, I've seen it from all different sides and this time around I couldn't feel stronger about the way I feel for just getting out there."

"I'm in my best shape than I've ever been in, so if I can be stronger physically there's no reason why I can't be better than I've been."

"Two years ago I was down here in the same tournament and I was ranked number two in the world and you've got no idea how far my mind was from the game and now I'm in an opposite situation, this is something I'm committed to."

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
New York	98	Boston	82
Philadelphia	98	Sacramento	85
Minnesota	117	LA Clippers	109
LA Lakers	92	Orlando	89
Charlotte	109	Toronto	88
New Jersey	95	San Antonio	84
Seattle	114	Houston	80
Utah	98	Detroit	89

Portuguese championship			
Sporting Lisbon	1	Sporting Braga	1

Spanish First Division			
Valencia	4	Barcelona	3

English Premiership			
Southampton	1	Man. Utd	0

ATP RANKINGS

PARIS (AFP) — Here are the leading ATP men's tennis rankings:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	4547 pts
2. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3250
3. Michael Chang (USA)	3189
4. Jonas Bjorkman (Swe)	2870
5. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	2690
6. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	2660
7. Petr Korda (Cze)	2495
8. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	2446
9. Carlos Moya (Spa)	2374
10. Thomas Muster (Aut)	2326
11. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2299
12. Sergi Bruguera (Spa)	2280
13. Alex Corretja (Spa)	2275
14. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	2215
15. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	2211
16. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	2153
17. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	1809
18. Tim Henman (Gbr)	1782
19. Albert Costa (Spa)	1749
20. Karol Kucera (Svk)	1569
21. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1534
22. Fabrice Santoro (Fra)	1480
23. Magnus Norman (Swe)	1450
24. Andre Medvedev (Ukr)	1437
25. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1427
26. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1355
27. Magnus Larsson (Swe)	1333
28. Jim Courier (USA)	1266
29. Nicolas Pietrangeli (Ger)	1249
30. Marc Rosset (Svi)	1236

WTA RANKINGS

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Women's tennis rankings issued in Miami, Florida Monday:

1. Martina Hingis (Svi)	6264 pts
2. Jana Novotna (Cze)	3753
3. Lindsay Davenport (USA)	3696
4. Amanda Coetzer (Rsa)	3360
5. Monica Seles (USA)	2988
6. Iva Majoli (Cro)	2874
7. Mary Pierce (Fra)	2861
8. Irina Spirlea (Rom)	2577
9. Arantxa Sanchez (Spa)	2361
10. Mary Joe Fernandez (USA)	2114
11. Nathalie Tauziat (Fra)	2003
12. Conchita Martinez (Spa)	1988
13. Sandrine Testud (Fra)	1841
14. Anke Huber (Ger)	1829
15. Brenda S.-McCarthy (Ned)	1543
16. Sabine Appelmans (Bel)	1502
17. Lisa Raymond (USA)	1437
18. Dominique Van Roost (Bel)	1394
19. Ruxandra Dragomir (Rom)	1333
20. Ai Sugiyama (Jpn)	1252



Seattle SuperSonics' Jim McIlvaine (R) rebounds over Houston Rockets' Kevin Willis (C) and Charles Barkley (L), during fourth quarter action, January 19. The SuperSonics beat the Rockets 114-80 at the Compaq Center in Houston (Reuters photo)

ATP, WTA tours to hold money summit

MELBOURNE (AFP) — The heads of men's and women's tennis tours will hold a summit at the Australian Open here this week with women again pressing for prize money parity.

Increasing the number of tournaments in which men and women play together could also be on the agenda, officials said Tuesday.

But the new head of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), Bart McGuire, finds his bargaining position weakened by squabbling between the top female professionals and rank and file members over the shareout of cash rewards.

McGuire, who became the WTA chief executive last week after Ric Clarson suddenly withdrew, will have his first official meeting with his Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) counterpart Mark Miles, although the date has been kept secret.

Top women players have been campaigning for prize equality since the early 1970s when Billie-Jean King led the fight.

"I am tempted to say that equal prize money is not enough

at this point, but I probably won't stick to that position," said McGuire referring to the increasing popularity of the women's game caused by the rise of teenage stars.

McGuire said the women's finals beat the men's finals in the international television rankings at the last Wimbledon, U.S. Open and French Open.

"It seems a little odd to have less than equal prize money for the women," he said.

The U.S. Open has equal money, but McGuire said he would be speaking to Geoff Pollard, head of Tennis Australia, and the heads of Wimbledon and the French Open and any other combined events about money and giving equal facilities.

Top players like Martina Hingis have said they would like to see around three or four more joint events outside the Grand Slams where there are men's and women's contests.

Outside the four majors, the only mixed events are Key Biscayne and Indian Wells in the United States and Sydney. McGuire said he had an "open mind" on whether there should be more events but indicated that there were many problems, including "preserving the identity of the

women's game as a women's game."

But the women's case in negotiations will be weakened by divisions within their union. There has even been talk of top women players breaking away to form their own association and the dispute over sharing prize money and tournament access is going through the U.S. courts.

"There is inherently a difference between very top players and other players on prize money," said McGuire, a top lawyer with close connections to the game.

"There is certainly more concern among the lower ranking players on playing opportunities, on how big the draws are, on how many tournaments there are."

McGuire said he was optimistic the split would be healed. "I don't know how quickly, but I'm sure it will be resolved."

"My hope is that the players will resolve this themselves so they can have an association that represents all of the players."

"I think that the top players recognise some of the problems that have been raised by the lower ranking players and are prepared to deal with them," he said.

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	BULLETPROOF	<i>George Clooney Nicole Kidman .. in</i> THE PEACEMAKER	NOTHING TO LOSE	<i>CONCORD "1"</i> Nadya Al Jundi, Ahmad Bedeir & Nahla Salameh...in RIDING HIGH	ABDOUN BEVERLY HILLS NINJA	ABDOUN <i>Salma Hayek ... in</i> FOOLS RUSH IN	NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:00 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	<i>CONCORD "2"</i> MR. BEAN Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	<i>Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas</i> For reservations call: 640155, 625155

Arafat, World Bank chief sign investment accord

PARIS (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and World Bank President James Wolfensohn signed here Tuesday an agreement for an investment fund to promote Israeli and Palestinian investment in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Mr. Wolfensohn said this was a "unique" agreement involving the bank because it combines Israeli and Palestinian private investment for Gaza and the West Bank.

Mr. Arafat said the agreement marked an important step, stressing "there is no doubt about our determination to achieve peace and our determination to foster the relationship between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples, despite all the obstacles and difficulties we are facing."

The Peace Technology Fund, the first venture of its kind, combines the World Bank's private sector agency, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), along with Palestinian and Israeli investors.

"We are very proud to be associated with this Fund, which is the first of its kind to promote investment opportunities involving the Palestinian and Israeli business communities," Mr. Wolfensohn said.

The PTF will create business opportunities, reduce unemployment through job-creating investments, open new markets and increase foreign exchange earnings.

"We view it as a very positive development on the road to peace and prosperity in the region."

The Peres Centre for Peace,

founded by former left-wing Israeli Premier Shimon Peres, and the Capital and Evergreen groups representing Palestinian, Israeli and international investors are the IFC's partners in the fund.

The fund, with an initial capital of \$100 million, is intended to provide a source of private capital for businesses in the Palestinian self-rule territories and encourage Israeli-Palestinian joint ventures.

The World Bank has warned of a large fall in private investment in Gaza and the West Bank, along with a sharp decline in the standard of living of Palestinians, because of the deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

The PTF, created on the initiative of Israeli investors and seeks to boost the private sector in Gaza and the West Bank, notably through Israeli-Palestinian joint ventures.

The fund, which could be increased later to \$200 million, will be jointly administered by the IFC, the Palestinian-Israeli investment group Capital Investments Ltd and the Evergreen Canada-Israel Management Corporation.

Mr. Peres, whose Peres Centre for Peace is supporting the fund, also attended the Paris signing ceremony.

The PTF already has \$50 million at its disposal, with Capital and Evergreen each putting in \$20 million and the IFC \$10 million.

Evergreen will be seeking investment from Israeli companies.

"All the Israeli banks, except

one, and the holding companies of Israel's two largest conglomerates [Cial and Knowl] have decided to take part in this fund," an Evergreen official said.

They are being invited to invest in one-million-dollar amounts.

Capital will be seeking investors in Arab countries and among Palestinians living outside the area.

Industrial countries will be asked to contribute to the capital.

Although the economy in the Palestinian territories is in grave difficulties, some areas have good growth potential, such as telecommunications, the fund's managers say.

Donors to the Palestinian self-rule authority pledged in mid-December to contribute \$750 million to its development projects for 1998.

A further donation of around \$150 million in the form of guarantees for private Palestinian investments was also announced.

The IFC has approved \$36.8 million in financing for nine investments in the West Bank and Gaza, one in 1994 and the rest in 1997, while independent investors have provided \$162 million for the projects, which include setting up a bank and an industrial park.

Mr. Arafat was in Paris Tuesday to sign the investment accord and to meet with French President Jacques Chirac before travelling to Washington for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton on Thursday.



CAMEL X LLAMA — CAMEL: Dr. Lulu Skidmore poses with Rama, the first ever cross between a camel and a llama while an attendant holds on to the parents of the new animal on Tuesday. The new male animal, called a cama, was born last Wednesday at the Camel Reproduction Center in Dubai. Dr. Skidmore achieved the artificial insemination that created Rama after a two-year effort. The camel and the llama descend from the same species that lived 30 million years ago (AP photo)

Butler awaits Iraq's response to French proposal on 'off-limits' sites

Iraq says experts will take part next month in first of 'technical evaluation' meetings on missile warheads, VX chemical agents

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. disarmament chief Richard Butler said here Tuesday he was awaiting Iraq's response to a French proposal on breaking a deadlock over access to presidential sites for his arms inspectors.

"I mentioned the French suggestion that... inspections of palaces, were that to occur... could involve inspectors being accompanied by representatives of the (U.N.) Security Council," Mr. Butler told AFP ahead of a final session of scheduled talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

"The government of Iraq will give us their decision this evening" on the issue of presidential sites, which Iraq has so far pledged to keep off-limits to U.N. inspectors, he said.

"My desired position is to be able to go back to the Security Council and say our access has been preserved and Iraq is prepared to ensure that, with respect to presidential sites if we were to mount our inspections there... in a way that is sensitive to their dignity... accompanied by members of the Security Council," said Mr. Butler.

But he stressed that the Security Council representatives would just be present, have no role in the actual inspection, and that "there can't be any reduction in our right to inspect."

Mr. Butler and Mr. Aziz moved a step closer Tuesday to resolving their crisis with a deal to assess progress in dismantling Iraq, the official INA news agency said.

As Mr. Butler and Mr. Aziz met, thousands of Iraqis took to the streets waving to fight U.S. forces should attack their country, while the Iraqi media accused Mr. Butler of provoking the dispute.

INA said the two men agreed that experts from the five permanent U.N. Security Council members and Germany will take part next month in the first of a series of "technical evaluation" meetings on missile warheads and VX chemical agents.

But it gave no specific date or venue for the first meeting, proposed by Iraq which argues that it has met Security Council demands for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, the condition for lifting seven-year-old sanctions.

The creation of such a committee follows Iraq complaints that the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on dismantling Iraq is biased because it is dominated by American and British experts.

But there was no immediate comment from UNSCOM on the INA report.

Mr. Butler, UNSCOM's chairman, arrived here Monday after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatened to set a six-month deadline for inspectors to finish their work unless the embargo, imposed after Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, is lifted.

Mr. Butler told reporters on Monday that the evaluation meetings would start in two weeks, grouping international experts with Iraqi officials and UNSCOM members.

Iraq had requested assessment by outside experts as a "log-jam breaker," he said, but added that the area of Iraq's arms programme that is of most concern to UNSCOM, biological weapons, was "not ripe" for an evaluation meeting.

Iraq regards China, France and Russia as its backers with-

ing the Security Council, while the United States and Britain take a hard-line against Baghdad. Mr. Butler was accompanied to the talks by his deputy, Charles Duelfer, and UNSCOM commissioners from Canada, China and Italy as well as Nikita Smidovich of Russia, the chief ballistic missiles inspector.

Iraqi Oil Minister General Amer Mohammed Al Rashid and Amer Saadi, an adviser to Mr. Hussein, were in the Iraqi team. Mr. Butler said earlier that only full Iraqi cooperation could lead to the completion of UNSCOM's mission and clear the way for the embargo to be lifted.

"This work can be done quite quickly with full Iraqi cooperation. It will end when it ends," said Mr. Butler, whose visit winds up on Wednesday.

But to set a six-month deadline, as Mr. Hussein threatened, would show "a degree of arbitrariness that makes no practical sense," he said.

As Mr. Aziz and Mr. Butler conferred Tuesday, thousands of Iraqi men and women pledged to volunteer to defend Iraq in case of U.S. military attack, at a demonstration that blasted U.N. arms inspectors as "agents of America."

"We are ready to sacrifice ourselves for our leader Saddam Hussein," chanted the crowd estimated at 5,000 people, raising their fists in the air.

"We will chop off any hand which tries to touch Iraq." The protest was the latest in a series of rallies since Iraq marked the seventh anniversary on Saturday of the start of the Gulf war over Kuwait.

U.S. forces in Gulf ready to strike if necessary

ABOARD THE USS NIMITZ (AFP) — U.S. forces are ready to strike with force against Iraq if the U.N. Security Council fails to defuse a simmering row with Baghdad over arms inspections, a senior U.S. naval commander warned Tuesday.

"We are here, we are ready and we have great striking power," Rear Admiral John Nathman told journalists aboard the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier in the Gulf.

The U.N. Security Council is trying to resolve the crisis peacefully but needs the leverage of the military option and that's what we are doing here," said Mr. Nathman, commander of one of two American naval task forces in the Gulf.

"We are within striking range of southern Iraq and we have tremendous capability," he added.

The Nimitz and its escort ships are one of two U.S. task forces that have been criss-crossing the northern Gulf since November. The other battle group is led by the aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

The Nimitz carries 100 aircraft which make around 100 sorties a day to enforce the "no-fly zone" imposed on southern Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

Khatami adopts more hostile tone against U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami attacked the United States Monday in a student speech completely at odds with the soft tone he used in a television interview with the U.S.-based television network CNN earlier this month.

"Our revolution delivered us from the domination of this master and we no longer succumb," he said in a speech at the mausoleum of the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

"We have seen the most harm from the United States before and after the revolution," he said.

"Even today American statesmen treat us like a master. Their arrogant spirit has caused us a lot of trouble."

"Because it is a superpower, it allows itself to behave as it likes. It wants to impose its will on the world."

"American leaders are out of step with the time. This is not a world that can tolerate a master-servant relationship."

"We do not need for America to get along with us and help us."

Mr. Khatami's toughened tone followed a speech by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, last Friday in which he threw cold water on speculation of a rapprochement with the United States raised by the president's "address to the American people" broadcast on

CNN on Jan. 8.

"Negotiations and relations with the bully American government are useless for us," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "It is even harmful for Iran and the international Islamic movement," he said in a speech that was widely seen as a warning that he would not countenance any change in his anti-U.S. line 18 years after U.S.-Iranian ties were cut.

Mr. Khatami took up the theme in his speech Monday insisting that Iran had developed its own resources and its own set of principles during the 1979 revolution and the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

"We will not give up our principles and values from the revolution and will not sacrifice our national interest for political gain," he said.

He said Washington's policy of "force" was completely at odds with Tehran's policy of seeking relations "based on mutual respect."

"Iran's policy is to remove tension with other countries and to seek better relations based on mutual respect."

Those who have based their relations with others on force, even if they increase their pressures and multiply their sanctions, we will not give up our dignity."

Mr. Khatami recalled that International Quds (Jerusalem) Day, the day the Iranian government traditionally marks its soli-

darity with the Palestinians, was due to be held on Friday and insisted this year's celebrations would show that the legacy of the 1979 revolution was still alive in Iran.

"A pillar of our religion is to defend the oppressed, and which nation on earth is more oppressed than the people of Palestine are by the racist Zionist regime?" he asked.

Mr. Khatami condemned the U.S. government for "supporting this racist and bullying regime which is the centre of state terrorism."

His tone contrasted sharply with his CNN address when he had said that Iranians harboured no ill will towards the American people and had voiced "regret" that the taking of American hostages in 1979 "hurt the feelings of the great American people."

"Nothing should prevent dialogue and understanding between our two nations," he had said in the address, the first by an Iranian leader to the people of the United States since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The address had raised hope that Mr. Khatami, a relative moderate who took office in August after a surprise landslide election victory in May, might overcome opposition from Islamic hardliners in the government and lay the foundations for a slow opening to the United States.

Israeli Labour leader vows to protect settlement blocs

GUSH ETZION (AFP) — The head of Israel's opposition Labour Party, Ehud Barak, promised Tuesday that a future Labour government would maintain Israeli control over major blocs of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

"We are in favour of maintaining settlement blocs like Gush Etzion under Israeli control," Mr. Barak told residents of this pocket of Jewish communities situated between Bethlehem and Hebron in the southern West Bank.

Mr. Barak, a former army chief of staff considered to

represent the right-wing of the Labour Party, also reaffirmed that a government under his leadership would reject "a return to the June 1967 borders" which defined Israel prior to its capture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But unlike the current right-wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Barak said a Labour government would not seek to maintain small Jewish settlements isolated in the heart of Palestinian territory.

Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet last week adopted sweeping

guidelines for areas of the West Bank deemed vital to Israel's "national interests" — including settlements, major roads, unspecified military sites, water resources and Jewish holy places.

While the cabinet refrained from providing a map of such vital areas, most commentators said they amounted to at least 60 per cent of the West Bank and signalled the government's intention to keep control over most of the territory even under a final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

U.S. Holocaust museum reverses position on Arafat's planned visit

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum, reversing a previous decision, will invite Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to take a VIP tour of the facility later this week, the Washington Post said Tuesday.

Museum officials had prompted an outcry when they barred Mr. Arafat from making an official visit after some members of the U.S. Jewish community warned that Mr. Arafat was "Hitler incarnate," according to one official.

"When I make a mistake, I'm big enough to admit I made a mistake," Miles Lerman, chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Council that runs the museum, is quoted as saying. "The more I think about it the more I think the visit of Arafat to this museum will serve a good purpose for peace."

Mr. Arafat is set to meet with

U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House on Thursday, two days after the president is to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to restart the Middle East peace process.

It was unclear if Mr. Arafat would accept the offer. Museum officials said they have tentatively scheduled the visit for Friday.

The reversal comes days after the museum rebuffed what many saw as a gesture of reconciliation by Mr. Arafat. The idea for the visit had come from a U.S. State Department official.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on NBC television that she thought it was "too bad" the museum had shut its doors to the Palestinian leader.

"We have many people say that it is important for Arafat to understand what was really

a defining moment in Jewish history, which is the Holocaust," she said.

For his part, Mr. Netanyahu said that if Mr. Arafat really wanted to make a significant gesture, he should order the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) to stop calling for the destruction of Israel.

"That would be a symbolic gesture that would tell us that the leader of the Palestinians is telling the Palestinian people: no more war, no more bloodshed," he said on CNN Sunday.

The Post said the Israeli government reacted "coldly" to the museum's reversal.

"If he's going to learn about the Holocaust, and if he's not going to deny it, then all the better," Lenny Ben David, deputy chief of mission at Israel's embassy in Washington, is quoted as saying.

Kach threatens Christian envoys to Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Far-right Jewish militants have made death threats against Christian American activists monitoring tensions in the divided West Bank city of Hebron, the Christian group said Tuesday.

The threats were faxed or sent by electronic mail to members of the Christian Peacemaker Team present in Hebron since June 1995 as part of a "violence reduction" mission by a group of U.S. Protestant congregations, members of the team said.

The threats were signed by

the outlawed anti-Arab movement Kach and were sent to the U.S. homes and offices of members of the Christian team. Kach was outlawed in 1994 after one of its supporters killed 29 Palestinian worshippers in a Hebron mosque.

In the messages, Kach said three members of the Christian team in Hebron "help and assist Arab terrorists" who have carried out fire-bomb and pipe-bomb attacks against the Jewish settler enclave in Hebron.

"For their safety, the above-mentioned terrorists are advised

to depart from the land of Israel for their own countries in the next 96 hours," said the message, which was sent on Sunday, the Christian group said in a statement.

The message said that if the three foreigners did not leave Israel by Wednesday, "their lives will be in jeopardy."

The Christian Peacemaker Teams is an initiative of Mennonite and Quaker congregations which have dispatched what are described as "violence reduction missions" to trouble spots around the world.

New Bond Brosnan casts Connery barb

HONG KONG (AFP) — Pierce Brosnan, latest James Bond incarnation, took a swipe at predecessor Sean Connery's reported desire to make another of the wildly successful films. "Maybe he needs the work... [or] maybe he's just all kind of teed off," Brosnan told a news conference here, adding it was "highly unlikely" screen veteran Connery would return to the coveted role. Co-star Michelle Yeoh, flanking Brosnan at the press conference, said she would like to break with the tradition of 007's leading women and feature in another of the films. "I'm trying to convince the producers," she added.

Travolta tops bill at Diana ball

LONDON (AFP) — American film star John Travolta and his actress wife Kelly Preston have been invited to the "Princess Ball," an event in aid of the charity fund commemorating the late Diana, Princess of Wales. Profits from the minimum \$800-a-head ball in Beverly Hills will be split between the Diana Fund and a Californian AIDS charity, the Evening Standard newspaper said. The ball, and an accompanying charity auction, will be held Mar. 21 — two days before the Oscar ceremonies. Diana once danced with Travolta during a visit to the United States with her then-husband Prince Charles.

Spice Girls setting up 'Girl Power Towers'

LONDON (AFP) — British pop sensations the Spice Girls are taking girl power to the limit and becoming their own bosses. After two months of trying to find a replacement for manager Simon Fuller, they've decided they don't actually need one. "They already have a lawyer, a PR and a personal assistant," one of their aides told the Sun. "The workload has been taken off their shoulders and all they have to worry about is the decision-making." Instead, the five-girl group are setting up their own base in London which they have imaginatively dubbed "Girl Power Towers."

Tiger Woods tees off with Philippine president

CLARK (AFP) — Golf star Tiger Woods taught Philippine President Fidel Ramos a few golf tips before teeing off with local talent to win an 18-hole exhibition match. "He was a very charming and capable player," Ramos said of the 22-year-old American, who shot to international fame with a precocious talent that saw him win the U.S. Masters in 1997. Ramos, a self-proclaimed golf buff, said that he had invited the young star "to keep [him] coming back to the Philippines."

Old corned beef gets rich price at British auction

LONDON (AFP) — Two cans of corned beef from World War II were sold at auction in Britain for \$45. "They must be the most expensive tins of corned beef in the world," said appraiser Carl Willows, who insisted that the contents were still edible. Canned in 1940, when it cost a shilling, the corned beef was part of a collection of old merchandise that was sold off at Diss, in eastern England.

Bodies of Ouchi's

By Tariq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — The bodies of three Iraqis killed in a car bomb attack in Amman earlier this week were buried in a cemetery in the city. The bodies were found in a car that had been hit by a bomb. The attack was part of a series of bombings in Amman. The bodies were buried in a cemetery in the city. The attack was part of a series of bombings in Amman.